

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

MONDAY, 24TH APRIL, 2017

[CORRECTED COPY]

CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Minutes	1040
Communications from the Chair	1040-1041
Presentation of Papers & Certain Documents	1042
Presentation of Reports of Committees	1042-1046
Questions	1047-1076

Oral Questions

1. Major Traffic Jams on our Roads (*Question No. 96/2017*)
2. Increase of Minimum Wage Rate (*Question No. 97/2017*)
3. Review of the 2013 Constitution (*Question No. 98/2017*)
4. Four-Lane Highway – Nadi Airport to Denarau Junction (*Question No. 99/2017*)
5. Overall Crime – Trend for the Past Three Years (*Question No. 100/2017*)
6. Update - Fiji Barefoot College (*Question No. 101/2017*)
7. REACH Project (*Question No. 102/2017*)
8. Reward for Schools and Teachers Producing Good Results (*Question No. 103/2017*)

Written Questions

9. Number of Cards Issued - Help for Home Initiative (*Question No. 104/2017*)
10. Information on the Seasonal Workers Programme (*Question No. 105/2017*)

Ministerial Statements	1076-1100
1. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in Fiji	
2. Strengthening Science Education in Schools	
3. Update on Occupational Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation Services in Fiji	
4. Fisheries Development - Preparation towards the Ocean Conference	

MONDAY, 24TH APRIL, 2017

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

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

Hon. Josai Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs,
Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs
Hon. Faiyaz Siddiq Koya, Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism and Lands and Mineral
Resources
Hon. Parveen Bala Kumar, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment,
Infrastructure and Transport
Hon. Mereseini Rakuita Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation
Hon. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Minister for Defence and National Security
Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts
Hon. Commander Semi Tuleca Koroilavesau, Minister for Fisheries
Hon. Osea Naiqamu, Minister for Forests
Hon. Lt. Col. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime
Development and National Disaster Management
Hon. Jone Usamate, Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations
Hon. Lt. Col. Laisenia Bale Tuitubou, Minister for Youth and Sports
Hon. Rosy Sofia Akbar, Minister for Health and Medical Services
Hon. Alexander David O'Connor, Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services
Hon. Lorna Eden, Assistant Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment
Hon. Commander Joeli Ratulevu Cawaki, Assistant Minister for Rural and Maritime
Development and National Disaster Management
Hon. Veena Kumar Bhatnagar, Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty
Alleviation
Hon. Vijay Nath, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
Hon. Viam Pillay, Assistant Minister for Agriculture
Hon. Mosese Dreca Bulitavu
Hon. Parmod Chand
Hon. Mohammed Mursalinul Abe Dean
Hon. Jiosefa Dulakiverata
Hon. Viliame Rogoibulu Gavoka
Hon. Semesa Druavesi Karavaki
Hon. Ro Teimumu Vuikaba Kepa
Hon. Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki
Hon. Jilila Nalibu Kumar
Hon. Dr. Brij Lal
Hon. Alvik Avhikrit Maharaj
Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua
Hon. Alivereti Nabulivou
Hon. Ruveni Nadabe Nadalo
Hon. Ratu Sela Vuinakasa Nanovo
Hon. Niko Nawaikula
Hon. Mataiasi Akoula Niumataiwalu
Hon. Howard Robin Thomas Politini

Hon. Prof. Biman Chand Prasad
Hon. Aseri Masivou Radrodro
Hon. Salote Vuibureta Radrodro
Hon. Lt. Col. Netani Rika
Hon. Balmindar Singh
Hon. Prem Singh
Hon. Ashneel Sudhakar
Hon. Anare Tuidraki Vadei
Hon. Samuela Bainikalou Vunivalu
Hon. Mikaele Rokosova Leawere

Absent

Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications
Hon. Iliesa Delana, Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Friday, 24th March, 2017, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to the first day of the April sitting of Parliament. I also welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching proceedings on television and the internet, and listening to the radio. And a special welcome to the PL100 students from the University of the South Pacific, who are here with us this morning. Thank you for taking interest in your Parliament.

Provision of Sign Language – Parliament Sitings

I am delighted to announce that for the first time ever, the Parliament has now secured the services of officers who are proficient in sign language, to provide simultaneous interpretation of the Parliament sittings to the viewers. This has now commenced as of today and I am glad that Parliament is ensuring that information and communications in the Parliament sittings is also accessible to the deaf people.

As you may all have been aware, Parliament has been working on trying to get this service running. However, due to the technical challenges faced, this was not possible for the February and March sittings of this year.

I am grateful to the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation for responding positively to our call for assistance in this respect.

My appreciation also goes out to the Fiji Association of the Deaf, the Department of Communications and the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation for their commitments towards this worthy cause.

2017 Coca Cola Games - Congratulatory Messages

At this juncture, I would like to congratulate all the students who participated at the 2017 Coca Cola Games and to Natabua High School for winning the Boys Title and Adi Cakobau School for winning the Girls Title. Congratulations!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

Point of Order

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 125(2) and (3) regarding my motion that was rejected by Parliament after it had gone through, in my view, the proper vetting and authority of the Business Committee.

The Business Committee met on Thursday and agreed on my motion and the motion is simply to express support to FSC for partnering with the *iTaukei* cane farmers through cooperatives and joint ventures.

There was a flying minute sent out on Friday, which did not say anything about my motion, and again on Sunday, it said nothing about my motion. It was only last night, I got a phone call that my motion has been rejected. I find this to be in breach of Standing Orders 125(2) and 125(3) that a motion of this nature will benefit sugar.

We are in the midst of debating on Sugar Bills 19 and 20 of 2016 and this, we believe, is integral to that, to increase production by involving a lot of *iTaukei* farmers who have lost interest in the sugar industry. I believe it is a viable motion, Madam Speaker, and it is sad that this Parliament has seen this to be a racist motion. If it is racist, Madam Speaker

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Member, your point of order is clear.

Actually, the Secretary-General received objections to the inclusion of the motion by the Honourable Viliame Gavoka. These objections were received past the deadline, however, I had accepted them.

Having considered the objections at length, I ruled that the Motion is out of order as it breaches Standing Order 48(a).

The motion, as worded, seeks to single out a particular ethnic group of Fijian farmers and potential farmers. The FSC, like other Government agencies and ministries, provides assistance to all Fijians on the basis of need and, where applicable, on the basis of merit and not ethnicity.

The Honourable Gavoka was informed of my ruling.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the Fiji National University Annual Report 2015 to Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Fiji National University Annual Report 2015 to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

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

- 1) Department of Forest Annual Report 2014; and
- 2) Forestry Department Annual Report 2015.

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

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Department of Forest Annual Report 2014 and the Forestry Department Annual Report 2015 to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Petition to Remove Discriminatory Double Penalty System, Ill-Treatment and Illegal Bookings of Drivers by LTA Officials

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs Report on the petition for Parliament to remove discriminatory double penalty system, ill-treatment and illegal booking of drivers by the Officials of Land Transport Authority (LTA).

The Parliamentary Standing Committee under the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji and the Parliament Standing Orders aim to enhance transparency and accountability by public agencies and officials. The Report examines oral submissions by LTA on their view in regards to the mentioned petition.

The Committee held its first meeting for this issue on 28th March, 2017 and agreed to consult LTA first before getting the views of the other stakeholders. The response received from LTA confirmed that the issues raised in the petitions have been addressed.

In this regard, the amendments that were made to the Land Transport Act 1998 in 2015, had resolved the old issue that arises from the demerit point system. Further, the Committee was also informed that the demerit points are only awarded by the courts and LTA prosecutors update the records to capture the demerit points that were awarded and these records are maintained in the LTA database.

On this note, the Committee had agreed not to take further action in terms of the consultation of this petition since the issue has been resolved through the amendments that were made to the LTA Act 1998 in 2015.

Overall, the Committee acknowledges the efforts of the LTA in putting in place measures to improve and strengthen the enforcement of its functions and obligation as per legislated under the LTA Act, not only to address the issues that were raised for the demerit points system, but also to other issues that relate to land transport affairs in Fiji.

The Committee appreciates the monitoring that was undertaken by LTA, in terms of ensuring that its divisional staffs had been trained and educated on the amendments made to the LTA Act in 2015, as well as the awareness that were conducted for the stakeholders.

At this juncture, I wish to thank the Honourable Members and the Secretariat team who were involved in the production of this bipartisan report: my Committee colleagues; Honourable Veena Bhatnagar (Deputy Chairperson), Honourable Salote Radrodro, Honourable Ruveni Nadalo, Honourable Anare Vadei and Honourable Alvick Maharaj.

With these words, I commend this Report to Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

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

Standing Committee on Social Affairs' Review Report on Assessments
Made to the National Fire Authority 2012 Annual Report

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs Review Report on the assessment made to the National Fire Authority (NFA) 2012 Annual Report.

The assessment made to NFA's 2012 Annual Report was done in accordance with Section 109 (2)(b) of the Standing Orders of Parliament, in which the Standing Committee on Social Affairs is mandated to look into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, culture, media and their administration. Initially, the Committee, after its internal deliberation on the Annual Report, then invited NFA to present some of the key aspects for its performance. Some of the key areas that were presented to the Committee included NFA's budgetary performance, organisational structure, administration, major achievements and challenges.

The assessments made by the Committee revealed that out of the 95 fire incidents, majority (91 percent) of the fire incidents that had happened in 2012 were residential properties than the commercial fires 9 percent related incidents.

The Committee commended the work of NFA in 2012 which they had responded to a total of 2,798 fire incidents which has increased by 374 compared to NFA's 2011 fire incidents response. The review Report is a bipartisan one, which has the input of both sides of the Committee. The Committee has noted the contents of the annual report and due to the time that has lapsed, the Committee anticipates that corrective actions have been taken by NFA to address the challenges and issues that were faced by NFA in 2012.

The Committee acknowledges the efforts of NFA in providing first-hand information to the Members in relation to NFA's performance, as per detailed in the 2012 Annual Report.

Also, I would like to thank the Members of the Committee and all their substantial efforts in the consultations, as well as in the formulation of this bipartisan report.

Finally, I also would like to thank the Secretariat team for their continuous support towards the compilation and the finalisation of this Committee Report.

With those words, on behalf of the Committee, I commend this Report to Parliament.

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

(Report handed to Secretary-General)

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

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Point of order, Madam Speaker. Under Standing Order 39, I note with serious concern that since the establishment of this Parliament, we have had a number of reports presented to this Parliament and very few, I think only reports on Bills, if I am correct, have been debated in this Parliament.

Madam Speaker, it makes no sense to have Committees to look at Reports. They come to Parliament, present them, and there is no debate on any of those reports. I think it is becoming a futile exercise in terms of referring reports to the Committees. The Committees are deliberating on the reports, reporting them to Parliament and the Parliament has not debated on it. I think we need to consider this seriously in the Business Committee and perhaps allocate time in Parliament so that some of these reports can be debated, otherwise it is a meaningless exercise, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Your concern is noted.

HON. LT.COL. I. B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, if I may respond to the Point of Order raised by the Honourable Member, Standing Order 39 does not specify any specific times just to which reports will have to be debated. However, Madam Speaker, I wish to mention that ministries will also have to respond to the annual reports and that is something that we are doing this morning

my ministry for example, and then we should be in a position to debate on the reports once the response from the relevant ministries are tabled before the House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, if I can respond to that as well. I am not taking about the response from the ministries. I think when the reports are presented to Parliament, there is a motion and as we have just saw, the Honourable Member moved two motions, seeking specifically a debate at a later date and the later date in this case, we have had reports since 2014 and 2015, that is the point I am making. I am not pointing out on what the ministry does or not, as the fact of the matter is that, it is a parliamentary matter and I think the Business Committee needs to consider this and make sure that the reports are debated and time allocated to it. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. You do have other opportunities where issues can be raised and by way of motions, questions and ministerial statements and that is in the Parliamentary process.

Responses from Government Ministries to Reports of Standing Committees

Honourable Members, although not on the Order Paper, the Secretariat has received responses from relevant government departments with respect to reports of Standing Committees. At this juncture, I am to remind the House that once the reports of Standing Committees are tabled, the respective ministries have 60 days to respond to the reports.

I am delighted to say that the following Ministers will table their responses this morning;

1. Minister for Health and Medical Services;
2. Minister for Agriculture, Rural, Maritime Development and National Disaster Management; and
3. Minister for Youth and Sports.

I now call on the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services to table her response.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121(6)(b), I hereby table my response to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs Report on the Ministry of Health Annual Reports 2014 and 2015. Thank you Madam Speaker.

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

(Response handed to the Secretary-General)

I now call on the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural Maritime Development and Natural Disaster Management to table his response.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, before I table the report please just allow me, for the purpose of the proper and right records of this House. I refer again to the point of order raised by the Honourable Gavoka, let me state before this august House that the motion by the Honourable Member was not discussed during the Business Committee meeting on Thursday. The motion came by way of a Flying Minute. It was never discussed at all during the Business Committee meeting on Thursday, 20th April, 2017.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121(6)(b), I hereby table my response to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources Report on the Ministry of Agriculture Annual Reports for 2008, 2009, 2011 and 2012.

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

(Response handed to the Secretary-General)

I now call on the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports to table his response.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 121(6)(b), I hereby table my response to the Standing Committee on Social Welfare Reports on the Ministry of Youth and Sports Annual Report 2015.

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

(Response handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Point of order, Madam Speaker. This is under Standing Order 43, Urgent Oral Question. Standing Order 43(1) says, and if I can read this:

“Despite Standing Order 41(2), a member who is not a Minister, may, at the start of the time appointed for questions under Standing Order 34, give notice of an urgent oral question by delivering a written copy of the question to the Secretary-General one hour before the sitting in which the question will be asked and the question must be of an urgent character and relates to a matter of public importance”.

Madam Speaker, the urgent oral question was in relation to the lack of availability of medicines in hospitals and I was going to ask this urgent question to the Honourable Minister and bring to her attention the state of the availability of medicines in the CWM hospital, and I thought it was an important question, a matter of public interest and we should have been allowed to ask that question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I have had a look at your question, but the question refers to an issue that has been on going in the past so many years. Therefore, it does not qualify as an urgent question to be delivered at this time and this is why this question was not allowed.

A question that is urgent will be a matter of urgency but this is an issue that has been ongoing.

Honourable Salote Radrodro, you still have the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, can I raise a Point of Order first. Just a point of clarification in regards to the motion by the Honourable Gavoka that has not been included in the Order Paper

HON. SPEAKER.- I am sorry, Honourable Member, I will not allow that in the Order Paper. I had already made a ruling on that Point of Order and we will now move on to the next Item.

Honourable Radrodro, please ask your question now.

QUESTIONSOral Questions**Major Traffic Jams on our Roads
(Question No. 96/2017)**

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Honourable Speaker, before I ask my question, may I first of all, echo your sentiments in congratulating the girls from Adi Cakobau School in winning the Coca Cola Girls Division in the true spirit of *Waimanu Kui*, and also the boys from Natabua High School, all the way from the Western Division.

Madam Speaker, my question is:

Can the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing Environment, Infrastructure and Transport brief the House on what is being done to address major traffic jams due to the huge number of vehicles on our roads today?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I also thank the Honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, as a developing country, Fiji is experiencing shift in transportation preference as it becomes more inclined towards private transportation.

Madam Speaker, in December, 2016, the national vehicle registered with the LTA was at 110,763, as compared to 101,425 in December in 2015; signifying a 9.2 percent increase.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the increase in vehicle population, the decentralisation of activities, change in land use composition, rural to urban migration and informal settlements have influenced travel patterns of the public travelling to work, school, accessing to health and recreational facilities.

Madam Speaker, the positive economic outlook, investor confidence in Fiji have inspired many Fijians to improve their standard of living; whether it is migrating to major urban centres for better education and employment opportunities or to engage in business enterprises. It is the ability to secure a roof over one's head and owning a car are two title indicators for the promise, Madam Speaker. This is a trend for an aspiring society, Madam Speaker, to which Fiji is no exception.

Madam Speaker, the LTA works to ensuring the public transport services to the general public is maintained or enhanced. That is one of the core functions guiding its service delivery. The Fiji Police Force Traffic Department, LTA officers and municipal officers manage traffic during peak period at busy intersections and schools closing zones to ensure there is smooth flow of traffic.

Madam Speaker, the ministry has also established a technical working group with all the stakeholders from the private and public sector, to develop plans in tackling traffic congestion and its concentration includes:

1. The implementation of flexi hours, and this consultation continues with the relevant stakeholders;
2. The need to implement dedicated lanes during peak hours;
3. Proposed bypass in certain locations; and
4. Recommend three and four lanes.

Madam Speaker, all in all, that will require concerted effort from users of the transport systems, urban planners, policy makers and decision-makers to propose and implement targeted solutions that will achieve an intended outcome. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Supplementary question.

Thank you, Honourable Minister, for your response. The problem here is that we have too many cars, our roads have very much remained the same. So, what is your ministry doing with the Ministry of Economy, in terms of the high importation of cars, particularly the Hybrid and the electronic ones because of the removal of the duties?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. The onus is on you to response to that question.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Member has stated that the vehicle population is increasing and questions what the Ministry of Economy is doing.

Madam Speaker, as we all are aware, the major works from Nausori to Suva has started; the four lanes. This is the only government which has got vision ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- ... and political will to do such things, Madam Speaker.

In terms of the vehicles that she is saying on what the Ministry or LTA is going to do, that is an individual's right, Madam Speaker, and this Government is not going to deny that right.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker, as usual, the Honourable Minister has not answered the question. We all know that traffic flow has increased, the number of vehicles has increased and his explanation is understood, that is a no-brainer. What he needs to tell....

HON. SPEAKER.- Is that your question?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, let me raise this Point of Order again. You have repeatedly told the Honourable Members on the other side that...

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ...we have one minute to ask the question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- They should respect that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! You stood up to ask a supplementary question...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, I am asking a supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- ...not a Point of Order.

(Honourable Government Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- You have had your time. Please, Honourable Minister.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I have one minute to ask a question, I just raised an argument
....

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a question to be asked?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I have got one minute.

HON. SPEAKER.- Has he asked a question that you can answer, Honourable Minister?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- He has not asked a question.

HON. SPEAKER.- He has not asked, so I now give the floor to the Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I was listening to the Honourable Minister, he said nothing. He said nothing. The four lanes? Nearly done.

HON. SPEAKER.- Your question, please?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And he was only making recommendations.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Alright, this is the question. Will you build another bypass and secondly as recommended by

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Sorry, you are allowed only one question. You have not asked a question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is related to that.

HON. SPEAKER.- You have made a proposition.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, no!

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Will there be another bypass?

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other question, is there any other supplementary question?

Honourable Aseri Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply and I am trying to find out what was his reply to the question that was asked.

The supplementary question I would like to ask the Honourable Minister is; what about the ratio of vehicles against the capacity of the road, to sustain the increase in traffic flow?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, that is a statistical question and the Honourable Minister may provide you with a written answer in response to that question.

Honourable Ratu Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Is there any other alternative mode of transportation between the Nausori-Suva corridor, like train or rail transportation, whether the Ministry has that in the pipeline?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. You asked the question and you have also responded.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- I asked the question whether there is any....

HON. SPEAKER.- But you have responded with 'train', so that is the proposition made to the Honourable Minister.

I will now give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker; are there any plans in place within his Ministry to construct overhead road works, like in Australia and New Zealand, in order to ease traffic congestion?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, before I respond to the Honourable Member, let me reiterate what I said in my response, all of them were jumping and said that I have said nothing. The fact is, they are not listening. I had said:

1. The implementation of flexi hours.

(Honourable Nawaikula interjects)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Hear me out Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

2. The need to implement dedicated lanes during peak hours;
3. the proposed bypass in certain locations; and
4. to recommend four and three lanes.

Honourable Members are asking, when? Have they not seen the bypass and the four lanes that had started from Nausori to Suva? Are they blind?

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- It has just started!

Going back to the Honourable Member's question, talking about overhead bridges, let us finish these four lanes and three lanes, and then we will think about that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Karavaki?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his answer this morning. My question is; whether the Honourable Minister is considering setting up a central monitoring system for traffic lights that would adjust the length of time of the green light and the red light in the time where there is busy traffic on the road?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker I also thank the Honourable Member. It is in place but we need to improve on that and that is what LTA is doing right now. Thank you.

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

Increase of Minimum Wage Rate
(Question No. 97/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations advise this House as to what measures has the Ministry put in place to increase the minimum wage rate in the near future?

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 would like to thank him for his question.

First of all, I would like to point out that the National Minimum Wage and the requirement that we have in the National Minimum Wage was something that came out in Section 33 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji. So it is something that this Government, for the first time, has put in place. That is something that is also showing the ideal that this Government has, to make sure that we look after the most marginalised. So I must say this term, it is unprecedented.

The requirement came up in 2013 and by 2014, the then Bainimarama-led Government had implemented the first National Minimum Wage of \$2 per hour. Then in 2015, the FijiFirst Government then put in a revision of \$2.32. So not only is the Government committed to look after the most marginalised in our society, those who do not have access to jobs that give them high pay, we were also committed to a constant revision of the National Minimum Wage.

Not only that, but within the Ministry of Employment, we also have sectorial wages that have been set aside for different sectors, and this is just a part from the establishment of the minimum wages. I think the question was on the measures taken. Sometimes we get lost, but if we know where we are going, we will ultimately end up there, and this Government knows where it is going. That is something that we need to reassure everyone.

After establishing the National Minimum Wage in 2014, as I had mentioned, Government carried out its review in 2015. Right now as we speak, on 21st April, 2017, we have already completed one phase of the review of the current National Minimum Wage and that is, the collection of data from the formal sector and the informal sector.

The data has been compiled. We have contracted this work to a Dr. Partha Gangopadhyay, who is a renowned Economist at the University of the South Pacific. He is now providing the data

analysis that has been collected from that survey, to review the minimum wage and the Wages Regulation Orders, and we are looking forward to this review being completed by next month.

Madam Speaker, I can reassure the House and everyone in this country, whose wages is subject to the National Minimum Wage that the work is being carried out and this Government is committed to making sure that it is completed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Speaker, the explanation given by the Honourable Minister

HON. SPEAKER.- Sorry, are you

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- It is a supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Can the Honourable Minister advise this august House if the mechanism of working out the minimum wage rate which will be finalised shortly, will also apply to all the other different sectors within our economy? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, the National Minimum Wage is intended for the unskilled people, who do not have any agreement with their employer to guide their employment. That do not have any actual mechanism that outlines what their wages should be. We currently have and I have with me here the chart of the Wage Regulation Orders. This Wage Regulation Orders sit above the National Minimum Wage and they articulate the minimum conditions that anyone can have within the different sectors. This includes the:

- printing trade;
- wholesale and retail trade;
- hotel and catering trade;
- garment industry;
- sawmilling and logging industry;
- road transport;
- building and civil engineering;
- electrical engineering trade;
- manufacturing industry;
- mining and quarrying industry; and
- security services.

So in all those sectors, if you are not bound by a collective agreement, this Wage Regulation Orders will set their minimum by what you can be paid.

It includes things on rates of pay, it also includes things in relation to overtime, sick leave, annual leave, meal allowance and subsistence allowance. All these issues are covered for these different sectors but over and above that, if there are people who fall outside the scope of those 10 different sectors, then they are captured by the National Minimum Wage. So the National Minimum

Wage is the smallest amount that any person in Fiji can be paid, and that is what we are reviewing at the moment.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker, ridiculous as it may be - the \$2.32, can the Honourable Minister assure the House that even that \$2.32 is being adhered to by employers around the country because there are employers who pay less than \$2.32?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes, Madam Speaker, Minimum Wages have been put in place. We do have people within the Ministry, whose job is to try to ensure compliance. But I think one of the basic tenets of employment relations and industrial relations is that the responsibility for making sure that people are paid their due wage is something that the Government will try to look after and try to follow up while at the same time, individual employers must take that responsibility amongst themselves, to make sure that they do pay.

When we are talking about the National Minimum Wage here for unskilled workers, we are also talking about your babysitters at home, we are talking about the person who cleans up in the market, the people who weed your cassava patch, so everyone who employs anyone who is unskilled, we ourselves must also take responsibility for making sure that they are being paid.

We do have Labour Inspectors and Labour Officers who work together with Provincial Councils, et cetera, to try to make sure that there is compliance and we will continue to do that, but at the end of the day, it needs to be something that everyone in society ensures that they are aware of this National Minimum Wage and also ensure that they can comply with the National Minimum Wage.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. Since there are workers as such (as he has alluded to in this House) who are being paid \$2.32 which is well below the poverty line, who are spread all over the country and if Government is serious about them, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister whether there are plans to unionise these workers?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, that is a very good question to ask the trade unions. It is obvious that in many cases, trade unions play an important role in society. They try to make sure that they look after the interests of workers but they tend to go after sectors, for instance, like the public sector, that is already well structured because there is money involved there, but there are very few who go after them.

It is not the Government's role to go around establishing trade unions but what the Government has done, in the old labour legislations that we had, people could not bring their grievances to the Ministry of Labour unless they were in a trade union. But Government had opened that up under the Employment Relations Promulgations by the Bainimarama-led Government, so that anyone who has an issue with their employer can bring that on their own to Government.

The other thing that demonstrates Government commitment to people who are not unionised in these informal sectors that we have established are the Wage Regulation Orders and the National

Minimum Wage. We say that the Government and my Ministry in particular, plays the role of an arbiter of a neutral party that tries to look at the interests of both, the workers' unions and also their employers. So it is not going to go around establishing trade unions for these informal sectors. That is something that unions need to consider whether it is something that they should look at.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, once you get paid, determines what you eat, what you wear, where you live and where your children go to school. There is study that \$160 a week is the living wage for Fiji, which comes down to \$4 an hour, advocated by SODELPA. When can FijiFirst introduce \$4 an hour?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The Opposition should be reminded not to make a statement during question time. Come up with a question, please! Do not waste our time.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, the question has been asked.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, we were given one minute as background to a question, and that is what we provide, background and then a question. Please, can we all remember that?

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

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I would just like to remind Honourable Members of the Opposition that there is a difference to background and making a statement. Your background needs to provide the basis on which you can ask your question, but let me answer your question. When we are talking about....

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- A Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, we need clarification. You, yourself, Madam Speaker, had reminded the Government side many times and they do not seem to get it. For supplementary questions, the Opposition has one minute, and it is that one minute that they have the right to say whatever they want to, and ask a question. If they are not able to ask their question by giving a background within the one minute, then you rule on it but they have one minute and the Honourable Government Members do not seem to understand that. We have one minute for supplementary, they do not get it!

HON. SPEAKER.- I think you do not get it, Honourable Member, because the one minute is really as the Honourable Minister had mentioned, it has to be background to the question that is to be asked, and not outside of that, which is the case of what happened.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- A Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- May I just remind the House, Madam Speaker, there is a specific provision within the Standing Orders which relates to questions. The Honourable Professor Biman Prasad keeps saying that we have one minute to ask a question, that is exactly it, one minute to ask a question. We do not need to get a repetitive question, relative to something else like he did previously. Standing Order 44(2) and (3) says, and I quote:

- “(2) A question must refer to no more than one subject.
- (3) A question must not be excessive in length.”

These are the things that are being put out for questions, and I wish they would read these, Madam Speaker.

If he is saying it is one minute, he has one minute to ask a question, it is as simple as that. And if there is background, it is related to that question, not be repetitive all the time. We understand it better than they do, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you for reiterating that. I now give the floor back to the Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, when we look at developing a National Minimum Wage, I have tried to explain that we are using it on the basis of a sound methodology. Over the past week ending on 21st April, 2017, we had about 88 people whom we had hired in the Ministry, to go out and collect information and data.

First of all, one has to collect information and data before one decides to prescribe what the National Minimum Wage should be. We are not going to work, as suggested by the Honourable Gavoka, that we are just going to pluck a figure of \$4 out of the atmosphere and instantly apply it, but we have to look at the ramifications of this on the people themselves who are most marginalised and at the same time, we have to remember that this National Minimum Wage is for the unskilled people, those who do not have much options.

We also have to make sure that we are looking at the interests of the small and micro enterprises. If you raise the wage too high for those small and micro enterprises, we have to think of their ability to be able to cope. So all of these issues, we have taken into account. If you raise the wages too high, it has an impact on inflation, so we need to take that into account. We also need to take into account the competitiveness of our industries here, relative to those offshore. So we are not going to just pluck a figure, a magic figure, an imaginary figure of \$4 out of the atmosphere and apply it, no! We are going to base it on sound judgment of all the factors that need to be taken into the account.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- (Inaudible)...too much, \$235,000, \$180,000, how much do you take home in two weeks? You do not feel for the poor! So thank you very much for the review. Can you, at least, assure us that the review will bring them up beyond the poverty line? That is the question, will the review bring them up to the poverty line? Can you give us an assurance, given the total amount that you receive on that side?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Alright, your time is up!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- \$200,000! How much do you take home in a fortnight?

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Sit down!

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, when we are talking about wages, you also

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hold on, hold your horse! Quieten down! I will give you some tea after this to quieten you down.

When you are looking at the income that comes into a family, you do not only consider what they do in terms of wages, you also need to take into consideration the effect of social wage. This Government has been heavily involved in identifying things that we can assist the most marginalised in our society. How do we do this?

We have assistance through Social Welfare. We do assist them through the Free Bus Fare Subsidy, we take all of these into account. So you cannot just pluck a figure like that, you have to look at the impact of all that Government does in all the different Ministries, and that contributes to what they get to look after their families. So, all of these will be taken into account in developing the National Minimum Wage.

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

Review of the 2013 Constitution
(Question No. 98/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs inform the House if the 2013 Constitution will be reviewed by Parliament?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I read in the dailies this morning that the Honourable Bilitavu had been going around the country, and this is one of the questions that has been asked, to do with the review of the 2013 Constitution.

Madam Speaker, once again, this question by the Honourable Member whom I understand is a lawyer, shows that he has not read the Constitution which is the supreme law of the land. If he had done so, he would have answered to the public that had been questioning him when he was doing his rounds. I cannot imagine the lies that he is going to come up with in the next Elections.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, this is the question that should be directed to the Honourable Attorney-General as it is a legal questions to do with the Constitution. They can say that it was passed by the Business Committee but we are tired, Madam Speaker, of correcting them in the Business Committee.

Simply put, Madam Speaker, there is no review process under the Constitution. What the Constitution provides for is the process for amendments to be made to the Constitution. Thank you.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, I am holding this Constitution and I refer to its Preamble. One of the main principles there, and I quote: “DECLARE our commitment to justice, national sovereignty and security, social and economic wellbeing, and safe guarding our environment.”

The Honourable Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, needs to build this nation on the principle of justice. If we look at the *Constitution of the Republic of Fiji*, Sections 27 and 28 contradict each other, the very reason why there must be a review. I ask the Honourable Prime Minister again, would you consider on the principle of justice to bring this Constitution into Parliament to be reviewed?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, I have already answered that question, that there is no review process under the 2013 Constitution. What the Constitution provides for is a process for amendments to be made to the Constitution, very simple.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- There are just too many problems with this Constitution...

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- ...not counting the fact that they burnt it, they burnt the real one!

(Hon. Government Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- They burnt the real one!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I rise on a Point of order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of order.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member has made an accusation that we burnt the Constitution.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- If he has proof of that, then bring it to this House!

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I will ask the Honourable Member to withdraw that statement.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- With evidence, I cannot withdraw it. There is evidence everywhere, but I do.

HON. SPEAKER.- You what?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I withdraw that statement.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Let me tell the Honourable Members, they removed, especially from this Constitution, references to the rights of the indigenous people.

Section 185 is very specific and that being the case, accepting that there is no mechanism for review, it does not stop you to establish an independent commission to look at it. Will you do that, please?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prime Minister?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, he should read the Preamble to the Constitution.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I just read it!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.-This Constitution is better than any other Constitution. Better than any Constitution!

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Acclamation)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- It looks after the rights of the indigenous population, better than any other Constitution. Madam Speaker, this Constitution is better than any Constitution. It looks after the rights of the indigenous population.

There was a statement put out by the Methodist Church on Saturday or Friday, that is a campaign material by SODELPA. That is a campaign material by SODELPA! They are talking about the racial discrimination. They do not understand what they are talking about, just like Honourable Bulitavu does not understand the Constitution.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- You don't understand!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- He does not understand the Constitution.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You don't understand!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- The UN Declaration on the rights of the indigenous people is targeted towards the indigenous population that have no land, that have been victimised by their country. The indigenous population of this land own 92 percent of the land.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Sit down, sit down!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Give it to us!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- So you can abuse the money?

(Laughter)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Is that what you are saying?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Give it to us, we own it!

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- We had funds for Schedule A and Schedule B land, Madam Speaker, that belongs to the landowners of this nation. Guess, who misspent it? Guess who abused it? This lot here.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I ask that he withdraw that statement, that is not correct.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- What is not correct?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You do not come here and make wild accusations. You must come here with evidence and I am quoting what the Honourable Prime Minister said. Can he be asked to withdraw that, please?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I will not withdraw it because it is a fact. Schedule A and Schedule B funds was abused....

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And I will not withdraw the fact that you burnt the Constitution!

HON. SPEAKER.- Sorry, you have withdrawn that. This particular issue has been mentioned so many times before in Parliament and is being mentioned again.

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjects)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I have not finished my speech.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prime Minister, you may continue.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I mentioned about the church coming up with the statement on the UN Declaration on the rights of the indigenous people. They do not understand what they are talking about. It is because they are a campaign mouth for SODELPA and it is a sad fact. This is a sad fact.

The UN Declaration on the rights of the indigenous people was to look after the indigenous population who have been victimised. We have not been victimised in this land!

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjects)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I do not feel victimised on this land but the Opposition comes up with all these arguments to justify the lies that they have telling the people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Bilitavu?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Basically, Madam Speaker, this particular Constitution was just an enabling Constitution to allow for the 2014 Elections. The Honourable Prime Minister said that there is no review process in this particular Constitution.

Madam Speaker, the 1990 Constitution went through the same process. It went through Parliamentary scrutiny and review. My question to the Honourable Prime Minister is, does he have the political will to allow this review because this Constitution was decreed, the amendments are to come through this House through a Bill, so that the people can participate and consent to this? At the moment, people do not agree to this, it was imposed on them. Does the Honourable Prime Minister have the political will to do this review?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, to justify your question, you referred to the 1990 Constitution which no longer exists. The question as it stands is referring to the 2013 Constitution and it is relevancy for a review. Therefore, your question is out of order.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, I gave a comparison in regards to a Constitution that did not have any review provision, and that to be done here. The question is; whether the Prime Minister has the political will to do this? That is just a simple question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. That is a question on political will. The Point of Order process is really on the rules and procedures of the House, therefore it is out of order.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, if the other side of the House say that it is a wonderful and the greatest Constitution; why are you afraid to take it to the people to give it their consent? Why?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- If it is so great, why do you not go and take it to the people to give their consent?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- It is always the great Constitution, thank you. Can you answer that, please?

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

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will answer that simply, it is very simple. I will answer Honourable Bilitavu's question.

I do not have the political will to do anything, I do not want to. That is one. For Honourable Gavoka, the people at large have given their consent here, (points at Honourable Government Members), to the 32 of us sitting here.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Radrodro, last supplementary question.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you Honourable Prime Minister for saying that this is the best Constitution, according to you, Sir. If I may quote in regards to the salaries of the Permanent Secretaries which says that it cannot be reviewed downwards and Permanent Secretaries are sitting on almost \$180,000 to \$200,000.

Can the Honourable Prime Minister confirm to this House, since the Constitution is saying that you cannot review that salary downwards to make it a fair and justice Constitution, a review on the salaries of the Civil Service to bring them up to par with these Permanent Secretaries salary?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Otherwise, Madam Speaker, it is an unfair Constitution, because it has got salary discrimination.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I will answer that question very simply. She does not understand what she is talking about.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- We are talking about the review of the Constitution and I have said that there is no review process. Please get her to understand this, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

I now give the floor to Honourable Prem Singh to ask his question.

Four Lane Highway - Nadi Airport to Denarau Junction
(Question No. 99/2017)

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

Would the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport inform the Parliament what is the projected cost for the completion of the four lane highway from Nadi Airport to Denarau Junction?

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.

Madam Speaker, this morning, there have been a lot of references to the Standing Orders and the Constitution, and may I also take this opportunity...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, may I draw your attention to Standing Order 41(3) because the question that has been raised talks about four lanes and I need some guidance from your good Chair, Madam Speaker. The four lane is from Nadi Airport to Wailoaloa Junction, not to Denarau Junction. It is out of order. I need your ruling, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Prem Singh, please clarify.

HON. P.B. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I expected that from the Minister.

HON. SPEAKER.- Just a clarification, please. Clarify your question based on the comment by the Honourable Minister; just clarification and no other statement.

HON. P.B. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, the four lane is a combined project from Nadi Airport to Denarau Junction, where four lane ends up at Wailoaloa Junction and then it branches off in a two lane. The projected cost of the project - it was a one-off project, that is the question we are asking.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- That is what he is not asking, Madam Speaker, and that is why I need a ruling.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Look, don't come in a crooked way to Parliament. Don't manoeuvre things!

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, this is very simple, I have got the plan here. This is out of order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, the question is referring to the four-lane highway from Nadi Airport to Denarau Junction.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, this is what I am saying, the four lane is not from point A to point B ...

HON. MEMBER.- State the cost.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Can I respond? Madam Speaker, the four-lane is not from point A to point B, what he is asking. This is what I am saying, if he wants, he can bring a new question and I will answer.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. MEMBER.- That question is wrong.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Point of order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The question is flawed.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Is that your ruling Madam Speaker ?

HON. SPEAKER.- That is my ruling.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Well, if it is your ruling

HON. SPEAKER.- You may bring up the question and be more specific.

HON. P.B. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, just on a point of order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I have already made my ruling on that.

HON. P.B. SINGH.- This question was agreed to in the Business Committee and Government Members were there and this is not a flawed question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Minister responsible for the issue in question has clarified the position, that the question really is flawed and I have taken that. Thank you.

I will now give the floor to Honourable Howard Politini to ask his question.

Overall Crime - Trend for the Past Three Years
(Question No. 100/2017)

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

Recent information and statistics maintained by the Fiji Police Force show fluctuations in overall crime cases. Can the Honourable Minister for Defence and National Security explain the recent trend in the overall crime for the past three years?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA (Minister for Defence and National Security).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Honourable Howard Politini for his question.

Also, I wish to affirm and support the media release put out by the Commissioner of Police on 24th January, 2017 that the Fiji Police Force has recorded an overall reduction in the crime rate in 2016. In comparing the overall crime statistics in the five categories of overall offences, the following trend was recorded.

Offences against Lawful Authority; there was an increase of 27 percent; Against the Person, there was an increase of 75 percent; Offences against the Crimes Act 2009, an increase of 48 percent; Offences against Public Morality, a reduction of 61 percent; and Offences against Property, a reduction of 24 percent.

Madam Speaker, while there is a fluctuation in overall crimes, the statistics indicate that there is an overall decrease by 13.3 percent. On the other hand, it is very encouraging to note that there are increases in reported cases, as members of the public have been made aware of the importance of reporting and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Madam Speaker, just allow me to go through some of these figures:

- The offences against Lawful Authority: In 2014, 265; 2015, 257; 2016, 336 - an increase of 27 percent.

- Offences against Public Morality: In 2014, 4,415; 2015, 2,714; 2016, 1,696 – a reduction of 61 percent.
- Offences against Persons, which includes murder and manslaughter: In 2014, 3,061; 2015, 4,880; 2016, 5,360 - an increase of 75 percent.
- Offences against Property: In 2014, 8,622; 2015, 11,340; 2016, 10,719 - a decrease of 24 percent.
- Other offences against the Crimes Act 2009, which includes drugs: In 2014, 1,273; 2015, 1,628; 2016; 1,880 - an increase of 48 percent.
- Overall, Madam Speaker, a reduction of 13.3 percent over the years of 2014 to 2016.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Maharaj?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Speaker, my supplementary question to the Honourable Minister would be; what initiatives have been undertaken by the Fiji Police Force that contributed to the decrease in crime? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Speaker, the key initiatives implemented by the Fiji Police Force to reduce crime, included the following:

1. Push forward of manpower to the frontlines, through ongoing recruits and training of officers;
2. Strengthening of special taskforces in all divisions;
3. Strengthening of the “Duavata Community Policing”, and that is targeting women and children; and
4. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders, to name a few.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Police Annual Report for 2015 states, “increases in rape and attempted rape by 38 cases, murder by 6 cases, robbery by 67 cases, burglary, 554 cases and other offences, 96.”

Could the Honourable Minister confirm to the House whether really there is a decrease or an increase because I believe it differently here? These are the figures for 2015.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you Honourable Minister.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And this is taken from the Annual Report.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Speaker, and as I mentioned, the statistics are very clear. In 2014, with reference to rape and attempted rape, it was 246; 2015, 284; and 2016, 328. So there was an increase of 33 percent, and that is what I said.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Increase.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Increase.

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

HON. A. NABULIVOU.- What are some of the challenges faced in addressing these types of offences? Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. You may note from my earlier response that there are increases in offences against the Person by 75 percent and other offences against the Crime Act 2009 by 48 percent.

These offences range from attempted murder, manslaughter, serious to common assault, forgery to drugs and let me take, for example, offences related to drugs. Madam Speaker, we agree that there has been significant growth in the unlawful handling of drugs.

Drug trafficking and other commodities are generally characterised by high levels of organisation and the presence of strong criminal groups and networks. In addressing such challenges, I support the sentiments echoed by the Commissioner of Police that we can overcome these challenges, if we work together as responsible citizens to fight this crime. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Update - Fiji Barefoot College
(Question No. 101/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, provide this House with an update of the Fiji Barefoot College?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA (Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member.

As you know, Madam Speaker, in 2012, our Fijian Government sent 10 women from the Villages of Dama, Waikubuku in Viti Levu; Nakorovou, Vunidogoloa from the North; and Naioti of Kadavu. They were sent to the Barefoot College in India to undertake a 6 months training, to become solar engineers. After that training, these ladies came back and solar-powered their villages in the communities that they lived in.

Out of that partnership, Madam Speaker, negotiations began in 2015 to build a Barefoot College here in Fiji. With the generosity of the Tui Nadogo of Macuata and the Tui Macuata, the Nadogo people have leased part of their land to Government, where the Fiji Barefoot College will be built. This will be

a partnership between the Fijian Government and the Indian Government, where the Indian Government will be funding up to around FJ\$2.6 million to equip solar equipment, technical expertise, training and vocational support in the field of solar electrification.

The entire project, Madam Speaker, is basically an initiative to hone in on the expertise and skills of rural women, to tap into their potential to become solar engineers and electrify their various villages.

In 2015, another 5 women were sent to India for similar training. They are from Nadogo in Macuata and 2 from Kadavu. They have also come back and are qualified solar engineers. It is anticipated that once this Barefoot College is up and running, around 1,200 communities, rural households can be solar electrified with expertise that we will draw out of this College. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Nabulivou.

HON. A. NABULIVOU.- Supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. A. NABULIVOU.- How will the College help Fiji and the Pacific through the Barefoot?

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, as I have stated, it will be a college for training women to become solar engineers. It will be an opportunity also to train, not only Fijian women but also women of the Pacific, to give them the necessary skills to become solar engineers and electrify their various villages and communities. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and the Honourable Minister for that explanation on the Barefoot College. Can you clarify to the House on how this women, graduating from that college, their expertise will be put in use in Fiji in relation to the purchase, or the solar energy provided by the relevant Ministry to our various communities in Fiji; who is going to be bearing the cost because without those projects, their expertise will not be utilised? How are you going to synchronise, or how you are going to ensure that those expertise are put into use for the benefit of the women so that they will be paid? Also, for the benefit of the communities, in terms of lighting in their communities.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. This a programme that runs in parallel with the Department of Energy's national programmes relating to solar energy. These programmes, Madam Speaker, these ladies are qualified solar engineers and they have already electrified their communities. There is evidence out there. What this means for this communities is that, the cost in relation to power is decreased a lot.

Apart from that, we are also attaining our national aims in relation to green economy and the SDGs. It means that children can now study under light, where there was none before. It is an empowering programme and it runs parallel in relation to Government's programmes pertaining to solar energy. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Supplementary question, I now give the floor to Honourable Alvick Maharaj.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you Madam Speaker. My supplementary question to the Honourable Minister would be; what is the projected cost to establish the college and the plans to bring this project to reality?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- There is about \$2.6 million, which will be the part that will be funded by the Government of India. The Fijian Government, we are also looking for partners in this. For the host government, it will be around \$3.1 million. As anticipated, this project will take a few years to complete construction wise, so that particular price tag will be spread over a number of years. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you Madam Speaker. My question to the Honourable Minister is, why was Nadogo identified, given that in this particular Fiji Barefoot College, given that there are other even economic centre that is in Nadogo, that is not working, that houses handicrafts for women and I was there two weeks ago at Vunivutu Village and the women prefer bakeries and other things? Why was Nadogo identified or how did the Ministry identify this particular area in Wainikoro?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, the venue was identified not only by the Fijian Government but also from the expertise we have in India from the Barefoot College. It has been identified as the most suitable for this particular project. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for the explanations given and I hear that there is a stakeholder partnership agreement and arrangement in place. Can the Honourable Minister inform this House, what is the role of the UN, specifically UN Women in this project?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, as I have indicated earlier, at the moment, it is between the Government of India, Barefoot College in India, and the Fijian Government. As and when other partners will come in, we will determine that, as and when we go along. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAIWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, there are ladies operating the solar power system from their villages; how does this training, supplement or help them?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, these ladies, where they come from, where they have solar electrified their villages. If something goes wrong in their villages, they are already equipped to fix whatever is the problem there. That is happening. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

REACH Project
(Question No. 102/2017)

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, before I ask my question, firstly, I would like to congratulate Adi Cakobau School and Natabua High School for winning the Coca-Cola Games this year. I would also like to take this opportunity to salute my Jasperian Team for winning the Cokes, coming from nowhere in 2013 and able to win the Cokes and defend the Cokes for the last four years, that is a great achievement, Madam Speaker. They won the first title in 2013 until last year.

I would like to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his rescue. He knows and I know the struggles that they faced, but we were able to produce 11 golds and that is a great achievement. Secondly, I would like to thank the girls for displaying true and good sportsmanship during those three days, and I salute them and congratulate them and I thank them for that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Question please.

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, my question is:

Can the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation enlighten this House on the REACH Project?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA (Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question by the Honourable Member.

In April 2015, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister signed a project agreement with UNDP to initiate a project called REACH. This, Madam Speaker, stands for Rights, Empowerment and Cohesion for Rural and Urban Fijians.

The total funding towards this project is around US\$2.6 million, Madam Speaker, and I must thank the Government of Japan, with the support of the UNDP that has brought this project into realisation.

Madam Speaker, the REACH project aims to promote peacebuilding, social cohesion and inclusiveness. It conducts awareness raising of the social, economic and legal rights of Fijians. At the moment, we have as partners the Human Rights Commission. We also have the Fiji Police Force that has just signed up, and of course the Legal Aid Commission, Madam Speaker. These institutions, along with my Ministry, they go out to rural areas, to raise awareness on the various areas of mandate that they have.

A week ago, there was a commissioning of three mobile buses, which will enable the taking out of these services in a more efficient and effective manner for the different institutions that are involved. These buses are custom-fitted, to serve as basically officers that go out to the rural areas. There will be one in the Central Division, one in the Western Division and one in the Northern Division, to enable the spreading out of awareness, raising awareness and the delivery of services to our rural Fijians. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and the Honourable Minister for that explanation, which highlights the information delivery to the communities. The communities are coming up with actual service delivery, like requests for dental services, dental buses, or dental vans out in the communities. How is the REACH project aligned to the Ministry of Health's work activities, to be able to deliver, not information only, but actual work on the ground? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have stated the partners for this REACH project. The Ministry of Health has its own programmes for the delivery of services for the institutions that are involved in this project.

Since it started from September 2015 to March 2017, the team has provided 2,388 persons with actual services. "Actual services" meaning the programmes, for example that my Ministry runs, the Social Benefit Schemes. People were able to access that particular service as and when this team was going out in the rural areas. Legal Aid Commission would be another example, where legal services are provided, as and when the teams are out in the rural areas. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Speaker, my supplementary question to the Honourable Minister would be; does the project promote Fijian Made initiative, and if you can specify that Initiative within the REACH Project?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Yes, Madam Speaker. The REACH Project is the champion of Fijian Made products, in this case, the free buses that I spoke about are made entirely in Fiji by the P.A. Lal Coachwork, and it shows again the capacity of our Fijians to come up with state-of-the-art products, such as the buses that are being utilised for the REACH programme. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. We will now adjourn the sitting and break for refreshment. We will resume at 11.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.57 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.30 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will resume from where we left off. I now give the floor to the Honourable Alvick Maharaj to ask his question.

Reward for Schools and Teachers Producing Good Results
(Question No. 103/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts explain what the Ministry has done to reward schools and teachers for their hard work in producing good results?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts).- Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for asking this question.

Madam Speaker, you would have noted that over the last two years, our teachers and heads of schools have worked extremely hard following the reforms that we implemented, particularly, Madam Speaker, last year after *TC Winston*, our teachers, head-teachers and principals have worked extremely hard to ensure that we finish last year's studies within the last year's academic year. We were worried at some point in time that we might have to spill-over this year, given the impact of *TC Winston* but together - the management, heads of schools, teachers and parents, we were able to finish our school calendar year by the end of November and we were able to get the results on time.

Madam Speaker, we have been thinking of rewarding our heads of schools and teachers for those schools with outstanding performance over the last two years. But we thought that we will give time to see the actual output of reforms on the performance of students and we thought that maybe two years with the new reforms would be good.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to inform the House today that over the last two years, we have seen extremely good performances of schools throughout Fiji and we thought that we will reward the heads of schools during the Head-teachers' conference and principals' conference.

Madam Speaker, for the primary schools, we decided to provide awards in two categories. The first category is that overall top schools in the various grades, Madam Speaker, like 6D is the lowest grade primary school. Overall, meaning, Madam Speaker, taking into account the three criteria:

1. Percent pass rate;
2. the number of students in the top 10 percent mark in that particular school; and
3. if students placed overall in the national scheme in that particular school, the ranking of the students.

So that was the first criteria, Madam Speaker, based on those three methodologies, we found out which are the top primary schools in different grades.

In the second category of awards, we gave it to schools with 100 percent pass rate, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in Category 1, we have got the lowest grade ED6D, ED5C, ED4C, ED3C, ED2C and ED1B, the largest primary school. In this category, we provided \$3,500 cash to the top performing school, along with a gold star - an actual physical gold plated star which they would put in front of their school indicating to everyone; "This is a gold star school".

Madam Speaker, for Year 8 Examination, we provided a gold star for the top performing school, along with \$4,000 cash.

Madam Speaker, for the second category with 100 percent pass rate, we had 75 schools. You will recall at that point in time when we said; "Let's target 100 percent pass rate", there were people who were quite pessimistic saying; "No, that is an unrealistic target". We have got 75 schools out of 730 primary schools, who had 100 percent pass rate. So in this category, we provided the schools in the first category. In ED6D, there were 353 schools; the top school for Year 6 performance was Sarava Sanatan Dharam Primary School.

For the Year 8 Examination Result, the top school in Fiji was Lagalaga Sanatan Primary School, right in the interior of Wainikoro. They are the top school in this country when it comes to performance in Year 8 Examination.

In the ED5C category, out of 164 schools, Drasa Avenue Primary School is the most outstanding school for Year 6 Results and for Year 8 Results, Lautoka Zhong Hua School.

Madam Speaker, for ED4C category, out of 150 schools, St. Annes Primary School is the top school in this category for both Year 6 and Year 8 throughout Fiji, out of the 150.

In the ED3C category, there are 30 schools and Nadi Airport School was the top school in both the categories, Year 6 and Year 8 Results.

For ED2C, the second largest school, 23 schools are there. MGM Primary School is the top school for both Year 6 and 8.

For the larger school, the ED1B category, Madam Speaker, there are two schools - Year 6, Nadi Sangam Primary School and for Year 8, Veiuto Primary School.

Madam Speaker, this is how we rewarded the schools in the Headteachers Conference. At times, we do not publicly acknowledge the people who are outstanding, who have gone out of their way to search for solutions outside the textbooks to ensure that the vision that we have for education is being delivered.

Madam Speaker, similarly for high schools, we decided that we will have three categories of award:

1. Category 1 would be the top performing school;
2. Category 2 would be the schools who have attained 100 percent pass rate; and
3. Category 3 are the schools that have excelled in national sporting events.

Madam Speaker, in the top performing schools, there are categories based on the size of the school. In the ED4C schools, there are 17 schools and Valebasoga Secondary School was the top school in ED4C category.

In the ED3C category, there are 47 schools and Balata High School was the top school in that particular category.

In the ED2B, there are 21 schools and Yat Sen Secondary School is the top school in that category.

In the ED2E, there are 23 schools and Rakiraki Public School is the top school, Madam Speaker.

ED1A, St. Joseph Secondary School out of the 21 schools, is the top school, Madam Speaker.

ED1C, there are 20 schools and Xavier College in Ba is the top school.

ED1B, there are 22 schools in this category and Jai Narayan College is the top school. So you can see, Madam Speaker, each school was given \$800 cash, along with a gold plated star which they would put in front of their school, indicating to the public; "This is a gold star".

Madam Speaker, with respect to the 100 percent pass rate for Year 13 Certificate Examination, we had Yat Sen Secondary School having the highest pass rate. For Year 12 External Examination, we had Thomas Baker Secondary School having 100 per cent pass rate, right in the interior. We had Nakauvadra High School in Rakiraki, again, in Rakiraki, a 100 percent pass rate, Madam Speaker.

Year 13 Examination, we had Nilsen College, Thomas Baker Secondary Schools, Nadroga Arya and Valebasoga Secondary School having 100 percent pass rate.

Madam Speaker, then we had the third category, "Excellence in Sporting Activities". As you know, we are placing a lot of emphasis on this, Fiji is a sporting nation and we are supporting all sporting events and last weekend's event demonstrates the level of talent we have in the country and no other country has that level of secondary schools game organised as we do in Fiji, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, for the Under 18 Deans Rugby, QVS was given the award. For Under 19 Rugby, Lelean Memorial School was given the award. For the Boys Athletics Competition, Marist Brothers High School was given the award and for the Girls Athletic Competition, Jasper Williams High School was given the award. For the IDC Soccer, Nukuloa College. For the Under 19 Netball, St. Joseph Secondary School. For the Under 18 Netball, Suva Grammar School was given the award. This was for last years' games awards.

Madam Speaker, this is how we were able to recognise, incentivise and motivate the heads of schools and teachers, and to say; "Look, your hard work is not going unnoticed. We do recognise and it is time that we publicly acknowledge." At the same time, we have seen that these awards have motivated other schools saying; "Next year, we would want to come to the stage and receive an award. We want our school to be a gold star school." So we strongly feel that we can motivate the entire education community to be part of the national movement that we have, led by the Honourable Prime Minister, in ensuring that we contribute towards developing a knowledge-based society. Thank you.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- It that a Point of Order or a supplementary question?

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Supplementary question.

Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Minister provide data on pass rate in year 2012 and 2013 and External Examination for 2016 in relation to 2014?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for asking this question. There seems to be all kinds of misinformation floating around about performance of schools viz-a-viz relative to 2014.

Madam Speaker, in 2014, Year 12 pass rate, we had 45 percent. After the implementation of the reform in 2015, Year 12 pass rate went up to 60 percent and last year, 61 percent. So, you can see that within our short period of time, we have increased the pass rate for Year 12 within the two-year period by about 17 percent.

Madam Speaker, Year 13, in 2014, we had a pass rate of 37 percent. In 2015, the pass rate went up to 55 percent, so within one year of reform for Year 13 Examination, pass rate increased from 37 percent to 55 percent - 2014 to 2015.

Last year, Madam Speaker, we had a pass rate of 65 percent. So within two years, we had a pass rate of Year 13 increasing from 37 percent to 65 percent.

Thank you.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, I would just like to thank the Honourable Minister for his response to the question. He mentioned about teachers working extremely hard after *TC Winston* and the results were on time and then giving out cash grants to schools in big conferences so that Fiji can see that. But I would like to point out to the Honourable Minister that the teachers make a difference. My question is; are there any plans in the 2018 Budget to increase the teachers' pay?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, our Honourable Minister for Economy has, on a number of times stated that the salary review exercise for civil servants, including our teachers, is at the moment undergoing, a number of times he has said that and the Honourable Minister for Economy has said that once that is completed, that will be implemented.

(Hon.. M.R. Leawere interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- You cannot listen! Again, specifically, as you are talking about salary review, the Honourable Minister for Economy has said

Unfortunately, you do not understand the difference between finance and economy and education. This is the quality of the Shadow Minister for Education we have.

Honourable Minister for Economy has said that the salaries are under review. Thank you.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister is on record saying that he is not happy with the pass in mathematics and FTU says that it is due to the high number of students and few teachers, the ratio of teachers to students. Can the Honourable Minister consider removing the 'Weetbix and Milk Programme' and hire more teachers to teach mathematics?

HON SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the problem is, I had published the full details of class sizes - national class size, primary and secondary by year in papers and urban and rural. If the Honourable Member read that published article, at the national level, our class size is below the maximum we have set.

(Hon. V.R. Gavoka interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Wait, wait!

The Honourable Member spoke about the class size. Let me explain to him about the class size.

The problem is that they do not read and get correct information and they shoot off questions, Madam Speaker. The issue about linking mathematics to class size, why only mathematics? They do not understand, Madam Speaker. So, Madam Speaker, I suggest that they do a better job before they ask supplementary questions. Do not ask for the sake of it!

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I would just also like to remind Honourable Members that in question time, you do not make propositions, you ask questions or seek clarifications on the Minister's statement.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister in opening the Fiji Head Teacher's Association Conference in Lautoka recently, announced that the overall pass rate for Year 6 level was below 50 percent and the Year 8 overall pass rate decreased from 70 percent in 2015 to 65 percent in 2016. My question to the Honourable Minister is, whilst congratulating those gold star schools, what remedial measures does he have in place to upgrade the standard and performance for majority of the schools which are not gold star in regard to the students and teachers?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I want to first thank the Honourable Member for reading that article, my full speech. Unfortunately, she did not read the part in that article where I spoke about strategies that we are using to improve and uplift the performance of poor or low performing schools. One of the strategies, Madam Speaker, I outlined there was that we launched on Thursday last week, a new package to improve literacy and numeracy amongst our children in lower primary schools.

Madam Speaker, the foundation for education is primary school. Now, if the foundation is weak, particularly in numeracy and literacy, then it would be difficult for students to perform well in high school because to learn chemistry or physics or biology, you need to have basic literacy as well as numeracy. So, we found that the weaker area is numeracy and literacy.

Therefore, we worked very closely with our education partner, the AQEP part of DFAT, to develop a specific strategy which was piloted in 35 schools. And then we compared the results in pilot schools versus non-pilot schools and we have found that this new strategy of improving - the

pedagogy strategy which means that the knowledge and skills of delivery rather than knowledge of content or subject matter. This pedagogy deals with how you deliver numeracy and literacy at lower primary.

Madam Speaker, our strategy is to improve literacy and numeracy skills so that we can boost performance in the low performing schools. That has been launched, every school has been given full package of that material, along with a DVD showing how teachers are delivering using the new strategy. Of course, other strategies are motivating teachers, rewarding excellent performing schools, et cetera. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Nawaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am only hearing cash rewards. What about scholarships for teachers in the schools and equipment, will you also consider that?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, with respect to equipment, all those are captured in the grant that we provide and if there is any shortage of equipment, schools do write to us, we look at funding and provide those equipment. So, that is actually a non-issue.

With respect to scholarships, Madam Speaker, there are two ways:

1. They can take leave and all of them can apply to TELS and TOPPERS to study at the local institutions; and
2. We also provide In-Service Awards. If they have done their studies on part-time basis, they have got one year left, all of them are eligible to undertake fulltime studies to finish their programme on pay, on pay with scholarship.

Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Honourable Member made a proposition at that time and not clarification.

There being no other supplementary question, we will move on to the next Item in the Order Paper - Written Questions.

Written Questions

Number of Cards Issued – Help for Home Initiatives (Question No. 104/2017)

HON. A.T. VADEI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation advise this House on the number of cards issued and the amount distributed per card in the “Help for Home” initiative from 2016-2017 budget allocation?

HON. M. R. VUNIWAQA (Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I seek a clarification on the question.

He is asking for the number of cards issued and the amount distributed per card, can the Honourable Member clarify what exactly he is looking for? We have issued more than 35,000 cards for his information.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, would you like to clarify?

HON. A.T. VADEI.- That is all in the question.

(Laughter)

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Amount distributed per card? If that is what he is looking for, Madam Speaker, then I would like to refer him to Standing Order 44(4) which specifically says, these cards are given to individuals, names of persons are not allowed in questions, so it will not be allowed for answers as well. So what is he after? I can give the number of cards per category of assistance, like how many people for 1,500, I cannot give it per card for the 35,000 people.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, would you like to respond to that question in the way you think is best?

HON. M. R. VUNIWAQA.- Yes, Madam Speaker.

Information on the Seasonal Workers Programme
(Question No. 105/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations explain -

- (a) How many Fijians have benefitted from the Seasonal Workers Programme;
- (b) What companies did they work for;
- (c) The demographic breakdown of all the seasonal workers; and
- (d) How much a worker has averagely earned from this Programme?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations).- Madam Speaker. I will table my answer at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Question time is now over. We will move on to the next Item in the Order Paper.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

1. Minister for Defence and National Security;
2. Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts;
3. Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations; and
4. Minister for Fisheries.

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

I now call on the Minister for Defence and National Security to deliver his statement.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in Fiji

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament; this morning I would like to make a Statement on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in Fiji.

There is no doubt, Madam Speaker, that this decade is branded and inscribed with increasing frequencies of natural disasters. A year on, the aftershocks of the severity of *TC Winston* is still visible. For the Ministry of Defence, cyclones like the *TC Winston*, flash floods, looming cyclones, anticipated earthquakes and strong tidal waves are not only reshaping our topography, they are also remodelling the defence and security landscapes.

Madam Speaker, it is for these compelling reasons, underscored by the threats of climate change on human security that I wish to highlight the emerging importance of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in national security.

Madam Speaker, humanitarian assistance is a range of responses or actions in relation to sudden-onset emergencies. Emergencies in this regard are times when lifesaving priorities come to the fore. Anticipating environmental emergencies, like natural disasters, sets the platform for preparedness. For our national security this preparedness means being ready to protect human life and dignity, and strengthening the capacity of the humanitarian community to effectively prepare for and respond to disasters.

Madam Speaker, four to six hours after the *TC Winston* struck Fiji, Military personnel responded. Vehicles trolled through debris, as Military engineers began to make preliminary damage assessments. For many of our soldiers, sleeping beside rations, walking in disaster-torn sites was the norm. Ill equipped, they marched on.

The first international team from Australia and New Zealand, their Defence Forces, responded and arrived into the country within the first 12 hours. Given their geographical proximity to the islands of Lau, Tonga sent through a naval boat with rations to Vanua Balavu.

Defence Force assets, including the *HMAS Canberra*, a landing helicopter dock ship and the *HMNZS Wellington* and *HMNZS Canterbury* proved to be necessary for surveillance and the delivery of humanitarian aid. International and national HADR Medical Assistance Teams were also deployed to needed areas to provide medical assistance.

Madam Speaker, soldiers distributed hygiene kits, tarpaulins, food, seeds and medical supplies. 700 Military personnel were deployed daily. For our strategic defence and national security planners, the realisation sunk in that humanitarian action fit for the future is inevitable.

Today, the RFMF is embarking on an innovative HADR plan which anticipates risks and challenges. The Plan will co-ordinate and execute HADR activities at the strategic, operational and tactical levels to support national security interests as they pertain to natural disasters.

A fundamental shift towards a model of humanitarian action that not only strengthens the response to crisis, but also learns and adapts to the evolving HADR environment, is being mapped. The Plan put in place by the Commander will transform the 6FIR to a dynamic team, trained above their normal Military training to respond during humanitarian crisis and disasters.

Basic recruitment has been expanded to include engineering skills for all new recruits. The acquisition of the Bushmaster APCs is an added value to HADR efforts as these vehicles are made for rugged terrains.

The expansion of the Blackrock Training Centre in Nadi to accommodate increasing peacekeeping and HADR needs is in motion.

We know that no other organisation has the capability to respond with the speed and effectiveness that the Military do in the immediate aftermath of any disaster. As first responders, the Military needs to be equipped and trained to deal with HADR necessities.

Similar plans and restructure are currently underway within the Fiji Police Force. HADR responses during flooding in Rakiraki, Ba and the Western Division are testimony of required preparations for our Security Forces. The ultimate vision is that in the first hours after the environmental emergency, Security Forces will mobilise trained medical experts, engineers, respondents and equipment, such as mobile hospitals, mobile desalination plants and power tools to the affected areas.

Often HADR teams conduct rapid assessments and analyse the possible impacts on communities and help national authorities develop strategies to respond. To be effective, they need to be equipped.

Madam Speaker, the international cooperation focus for defence has integrated HADR. In bilateral and multilateral dialogues, we have explored areas in which assistance and support can be tapped into the complement national initiatives.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, Fiji's role in providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the other Pacific Island countries is being carried out, like the *TC Pam* in Vanuatu in 2015, soldiers were the first to arrive and do relief work.

Despite the relatively positive perceptions on the HADR focus, there are areas we intend to improve and we are working to prepare ourselves to the added responsibilities we are now tasked with.

The scale and intensity of disasters require the combined efforts of civilian and military organisations for effective response. We intend to leverage on the use of technology to enable better information sharing and build closer networks between civil and military players.

Partnerships with international and development organisations like the UNOCHA, Red Cross are critical to knowledge, capacity and expertise required for the enormous challenges at hand.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I wish to again acknowledge and express our gratitude to the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, France, Tonga and Papua New Guinea for the speed in which they responded to our HADR needs for the deployment of their defence assets. I also like to acknowledge the Honourable Minister for Regional Development, his Permanent Secretary and his

team, for the outstanding coordination role displayed during the rehabilitation phase of the *TC Winston*.

There are many partners, Madam Speaker, to thank, and as our security forces engage to execute HADR plans, we hope that partnerships will be strengthened. Also, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the FijiFirst Government leadership for its vision and direction. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to respond to the Honourable Minister for Defence on his Ministerial Statement. Even we all agree, Madam Speaker, that there is a threat of climate change to human security and we really need to reshape our topography by remodelling our defence and security landscape. The test of our defence, Madam Speaker, was tested during *TC Winston*, how the military had responded to the people, giving them security.

Madam Speaker, during the emergency period in the wake of *TC Winston*, it took time for our security forces to reach our people. One is the clearing of roads to enable them to go to hospitals, to enable them to get immediate help.

While moving around Vanua Levu, Madam Speaker, after post-*TC Winston*, we saw that rations supplied by the military was quite late. It came after making their assessments and some of the assessments, people are still waiting for those materials to arrive, and even in some areas, Madam Speaker, where rations could not arrive because the infrastructure was really taken out. I agree that we really need to equip our security forces, especially the military to be effective in this particular area to respond, and probably the Honourable Minister can also propose an increase in budgetary allocation in regards to equipment and even having our own helicopters and even vessels. We do not have to wait for other foreign military personnel to do this for us, given that we are the Government elected by the people, for the people, and we need to respond in a very timely manner.

Madam Speaker, given that, that the Honourable Minister has also talked about in regards to creating committees and inter-agencies to communicate, one of the biggest problems is the sharing of information and we have got this from the Fiji Police Force and even the Military, when making submissions to the various Standing Committees have identified this particular area, that there is security information. The agencies do not want to share information and this has become a problem in ministries or agencies in responding, where the bureaucracies of the approval system reduces the response time.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, probably the need for more resources and trade, and I agree that there has to be training done to the military to respond in a mobile manner, attending to our people in regards to the basic things that they should do when encountering disasters, to be more responsive to things that they can do with the help.

These are some of the issues, Madam Speaker, that probably the Honourable Minister can take on board and the other thing, the military should also be assigned to manned our evacuation centres, providing food, cooking and the basic security, where other social problems can happen at various evacuation centres and probably taking them back to the rebuilding phase on how they rehabilitate more physiological training. Madam Speaker, that needs to be done to those who are disturbed and probably they are traumatised on this kind of training that needs to be done to our people.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, given that we can learn from what we have encountered during *TC Winston* on how to rebuild, the RFMF also can be tasked to rebuild houses. We have got the “Help for Home Initiative”, the cards and the materials, in some places only nails, roofing irons are arriving and people have to pay for carpenters, probably the RFMF can also be tasked to help our villagers in these areas, to rebuild their houses using our Engineering Section at the RFMF.

Those are some of the basic things, Madam Speaker, in order to improve this particular area, on how our people can respond to natural disasters with the help from our national security agencies.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Leader of NFP, or his designate, to speak in response.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. I think this is a very important statement that he has made, partly because, Madam Speaker, I think the preparation and the initial response after *TC Winston* was very, very poor, and in fact it took a while for the Government to get things coordinated, and I want to acknowledge here the role that the RFMF had played initially, together with the support from Australia and New Zealand, as the Honourable Minister quite badly pointed out, arrived within 12 hours. Madam Speaker, if that did not happen, I think we would have very, very serious issues in terms of how we responded immediately.

The point that the Honourable Minister made with respect to planning, I think it is an important one because I do not think that there was a proper strategic plan and tactical plan in place during *TC Winston*, where it allowed different Government Ministries, the RFMF and others involved in the relief work to actually quickly responded to all the areas that were affected. I think that is an important step that we need to have a very good plan, a strategic plan, a tactical plan, so that whenever we have a disaster, that plan, that strategy could be invoked immediately and the responses could be rolled on.

The other point that I want to make, Madam Speaker, with respect to the disaster and humanitarian relief is that, because we are prone to natural disasters, we need to look at establishing a national disaster fund. A rolling fund, a fund which is readily available to respond to at any point in time when we have the disasters, and I think it is not an unreasonable suggestion, and we can build that fund, Madam Speaker, as we continue and over a period of time, there are periods in which we may not need the fund, but we can accumulate constantly enough funds in a national disaster fund, so that whenever there is one, both the RFMF and the different ministries can have access to that central fund, to be able to respond to areas in the immediate time because what happen, Madam Speaker, after *TC Winston* if it was not for the general public and other organisations responding in the immediate aftermath of *TC Winston*, we would have some very, very serious implications. So, I think the idea that the Honourable Minister has brought about a plan, a strategic plan by the RFMF, in coordination with other ministries, as well as I would like him to add and Government to consider this, a national disaster fund which can be built on and which is always there for any government to source and invoke, and provide the immediate relief that is necessary, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts to deliver his statement.

Strengthening Science Education in Schools

HON. DR.M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members of Parliament; Honourable Members of the House would be aware that science education has been in the forefront of the national news lately, especially on issues pertaining to declining enrolment numbers in science subjects, especially Biology, Physics and Chemistry at upper secondary levels and percentage passes that leave a lot to be desired.

For this very reason, Madam Speaker, I rise to inform the Honourable Members of the House:

1. The position and robust content of the science curricular being implemented in our schools;
2. To point out the varying mechanisms in place to support this curricular; and
3. To draft how students' science engagement and proficiency can be enhanced and enriched through these and other mechanisms; and so reverse the downward trend that science education seems to be heading to.
- 4.

Madam Speaker, at the outset, I want to let you know that this is not only a problem in Fiji, it is a problem throughout the world about low uptake of science education by students. We cannot be complacent, Madam Speaker, we need to take leave.

Madam Speaker, globally, countries are now squarely focused upon exploring and initiating developments and progress-based on scientific developments. In fact, Madam Speaker, last weekend, there was a march throughout America and Australia as well about contributing to more science-based policy making.

The focus has never been greater than in this century, where giant strides have already been achieved world-wide in terms of new discoveries and experiments. With science and technology developments, innovation has seen the epitome of human invention. A lot of human contemporary issues or even threatening complications from the past are now eliminated through science and technological innovations. Serious threats to humans in the form of land, air, space, food, water and luxury are all now removed with new developments.

Just last month, UNESCO facilitated a meeting of Education Ministers of the Pacific region in Samoa to discuss science and technology policy making in the Pacific, which signifies the now new movement towards science education in the region. Madam Speaker, everyone is now getting to understand the importance of science-based policy making, or policy making based on scientific methodology, but to do that, Madam Speaker, we need to have science knowledge.

The national science curriculum emulates this concept of building on prior knowledge of students and this is seen in the progression of knowledge being introduced from Early Childhood Education to Year 13. In these valuable moments, I wish to help the Honourable Members realise that this progression of delivering rigorous, inquiry-based teaching and learning will set our young people on the path to becoming the next generation of scientists, engineers and medics.

Madam Speaker, in view of Fiji being signatory to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is well fitting that sustainability is a cross-cutting theme in the science curricular, to ensure its longevity and it being a driving force to shape and set our young scientists on their way to scientific prosperity. And for many young people, interest and accomplishment in science will turn out to fuel and propel their overall commitments and consequent success in schools.

Madam Speaker, I am unable to emphasise enough the importance of science education. Indeed, I echo the sentiments of the Scientific Advisory Board of the United Nations Secretary-General, and I quote:

“Science is fundamental in meeting the challenges for sustainable development as it provides the foundations for exploring new approaches and technologies to identify, clarify and tackle local, regional and global challenges. Science is inclusive in that it segregates no one regardless of race, creed or location, and is the medium by which all people link to their environment and to activities in their daily lives; it is cross-cutting in nature and may be found in the arts and other subject areas; it develops literacy, numeracy and technical skills.”

However, Madam Speaker, as I had alluded to earlier, the interest, or seemingly lack of it in schools, as evidenced by the declining science enrolments, and underperformance in external examinations is a cause of concern for teachers, educators, stakeholders/partners and tertiary institutions, and indeed the wider business and industrial workforce. To the extent, Madam Speaker, I had a meeting recently with the Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of South Pacific, raising our concern about the declining number of students coming to the College of the Faculty in USP, and her willingness to support us in motivating students to uptake science education after Year 10.

Undeniably, the statistics paint a downward movement trend for science education and the future of science in the nation: enrolment statistics in 2017, all show a decrease (from 2016) in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. Madam Speaker, if you look at:

Year 11	2015	2016	2017
Biology	4,424	3,984↓	3,021↓ (2.1%)
Chemistry	4,457	3,783↓	3,018↓ (2.1%)
Physics	3,222	2,964↓	2,515↓ (1.7%)

Similarly, Madam Speaker, if you look at Year 13:

Year 13	2015	2016	2017
Biology	2,736	2,573↓	2,228↓
Chemistry	2,936	2,763↓	2,234↓
Physics	2,051	2,068↑	1,269↓

Madam Speaker, if this trend continues, then in another 10 to 15 years' time, we will have difficulties in having adequate number of science teachers, nurses and doctors, et cetera in Fiji. The situation is really bad in some other Pacific Island countries, for example in Marshal Islands, only 12 percent of the teachers are qualified in the subject area to teach. This is the level of shortage of teachers they have but we are not in that situation right now, Madam Speaker. We cannot be sitting and be complacent, we need to arrest this problem.

Madam Speaker, the pre-conceived ideas that science subjects are difficult; that there are lack of career opportunities in science field in Fiji and the region; parents pressurising their children to adapt to career choices that are more readily available, less complicated to attain; and simply because of the low interest level of children into science from an early age are some of the main contributing factors to this.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, there is this notion amongst children in early years of high school or later part of primary school that science is difficult and this is one of the major problems that we need to break through, the mind set of children that it is not really difficult and that there are

huge opportunities out there in science in terms of employment and labour market, as well as pay structures.

Madam Speaker, this has contributed to poor performance also in science subjects because those children who have entered science kind of have this pre-conceived ideas that Chemistry, Biology and Physics are difficult.

Madam Speaker, some of the effects of lack of science development in any nation are the poor ability to deal with contemporary problems in certain areas. While other global nations are tackling national issues and constraints through development of science, Pacific Island States are lagging behind on many fronts. Inventions all over the world in areas of health, food production, safety, business, production and productivity, and human welfare have made tremendous strides. This then permeates into policy making with less scientific rigor.

So, Madam Speaker, if you want to undertake solid policy making, the policy making should be based on scientific radar and therefore, of solid scientific content.

There are also difficult protocols for scientific advice during emergencies. This could be in the areas on reliable communication technologies, disaster management, food storage and preservation, water purification, desalination, water testing, personal hygiene, waste disposal, et cetera. There are lack of scientific expertise for Environmental Impact Assessment, environmental monitoring and rehabilitation, lack of scientific capacity to deal with environmental disasters (chemical spills, ship wrecks, et cetera) droughts, infrastructure development and maintenance.

Often, Madam Speaker, we hear from business sector saying that we do not have this type of expertise, technical know-how in Fiji, and this is not only peculiar to Fiji but the entire Pacific region, Madam Speaker. With climate change, global warming and sea level rise at our doorsteps and threatening to vastly change the routine of life in the Pacific, the rise to other varied difficulties is evident.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts takes a very serious approach to these figures, and with the strongest possible and gravest of intents aims to turn these statistics around by changing mindsets and strengthening science standards in curricula and assessment, and providing opportunities that expand science time beyond the classroom, thus making connections to real life and assisting students in thinking about potential careers in science and ultimately their future.

Let me briefly review for the floor how our science education curriculum works, Madam Speaker, before I will get into some of the strategies that we have adopted exclusively to raise students interest in science education.

Madam Speaker, a child entering any of the Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC) around the country will encounter science in the form of play, information regarding the feel of the environment, and the sounds, smell and sights around them are relayed through play. Discovery and investigations are the way to learn for kindergarten students.

As the child progresses to Years 1-3, the curriculum focuses on familiar themes and allows the child to draw from their own contexts, thus making learning responsive and relevant to the learners. The new syllabus continues to enhance interaction and the development of many skill sets. Learning at this level of early primary is child-centred and enquiry-based.

The basic science introduces four learning strands of Living Things and the Environment, Matter, Energy and Earth and Beyond at Year 4, and these strands are developed through to Year 10. In the higher primary, the key learning areas of the curriculum now challenges and empowers students to use scientific processes to develop an understanding and appreciation of physical and natural systems, and apply their knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable understanding and make sound judgments.

Madam Speaker, Basic Science is compulsory to all students entering secondary schools at Year 9. When students reach lower secondary, their skills, knowledge and attitudes are further enhanced with new concepts.

Madam Speaker, there is more! The new practical components of science that complements the teaching of concepts in classrooms, engages students to develop important skills, enhances their appreciation of scientific investigation and further develops their understanding of the science concepts. For what is science without the practical and experiments?

Madam Speaker, we have also distributed science kits to primary schools, so that we liaise amongst students with interest and science at the primary school level.

Madam Speaker, we have also developed external partnerships through stakeholders and organised competitions and national activities. Students have the opportunity to explore beyond the classroom at many levels and are many times rewarded handsomely for themselves and their schools. Further, these activities are a “bigger classroom”, and participating students are part of National and International Conferences of national or global initiatives such as Renewable Energy or Ocean Anti-Pollution or World Water Day Celebrations.

Madam Speaker, two weeks ago our Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts launched the first ever National Science and Technology Competition 2017, targeting Year 9 students only, because this is the crucial year where students make decisions, whether they want to branch out into Science or Commerce and Arts. So this national competition in science and technology that we have launched, Madam Speaker, is for Year 9 students.

The competition is aimed at generating and creating interest and enthusiasm, and bringing attention to the many captivating and fascinating fields of science that students can explore and eventually make a very rewarding career out of.

So, all in all, Madam Speaker, it is about raising the interest, arousing competitions, giving them information that opportunities exist. All kinds of opportunities exist, Madam Speaker, and how science has become now in the forefront of policy-making, Madam Speaker.

There are nine sub-themes being explored in the competition. These are: Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Recycling, Food Security, Transportation, Health and Personal Safety, Biodiversity and Conservation, Environmental Issues and Sustainability, Risk Reduction and Management and Entrepreneurship.

There are four categories of competitions, and these include:

1. Poster Competition: This will be individual student work, with each school submitting their best entry for the Divisional Level judging;
2. Model Competition: Students may work in groups of 3-4, with each school submitting their best entry for the Divisional Level judging;

3. Scientific Investigation and Report Competition: Students may work in groups of 3-4, with each school submitting their best entry for the Divisional Level judging; and
4. Team Quiz Competition: Each school will field one team, consisting of four students participating at the Divisional Level competition.

The competitions will be judged at the Divisional Level (Central, Western, Northern and Eastern). Five winners will be declared for each competition in each division and prizes will be awarded to winners at the divisional level. From divisional winners, one overall national winner will be selected for each competition and awarded as well.

With these school-based competitions now being rolled out in all secondary schools at Year 9, we are factoring the development of a renewed interest for future science movements in students.

Madam Speaker, textbooks and other resources including teacher guides and handbooks support teaching and learning by putting into any students hand a compact but comprehensive package of all basic concepts in the respective key learning areas. Both students and teachers are encouraged to further research into these concepts during teaching time, aligned to the syllabi, and contextualize for students to make content and the scope of syllabus easier to follow. These resources are provided free of charge to each child.

Further, all documents pertaining to external examinations for all science examinations including marking schemes and examiners' reports are made available on the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts' website to assist teachers and students in teaching and learning and during revision.

Madam Speaker, in light of having graduate teachers with mismatched subject combinations, the Ministry of Education has made several strong recommendations to tertiary institutions to ensure that they offer appropriate subject combinations in their teacher training programmes so that we have good set of teachers in our schools.

Madam Speaker, we have also increased allocations for Toppers Scholarships for Science students.

No. of students on NTS (Science Programme) - 2014-2017				
Programme	2014	2015	2016	2017
Agriculture Science	6	12	11	7
Bachelor of Engineering	35	54	77	60
Certificate IV in Aircraft Maintenance	2	2	9	8
Medical Programme	161	200	165	189
Bachelor Net-Centric Computing	1	30	27	19
Bachelor of Science	7	13	23	6
Bachelor of Software Engineering	14	25	22	25
BSCGCED	17	4	3	13
Total	243	340	337	327

So, all in all, Madam Speaker, we are seeing a gradual increase in the science area in terms of our allocation for Toppers and this will motivate more students to choose science as an option after Year 10.

Madam Speaker, starting this year, we are preparing for more support to our schools and students who would want to take science as an option, but I think we need a national movement that would raise the importance of science education and how opportunities are there for students who would take science as an education option in their higher school system. Thank you.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for Education for delivering his ministerial statement on strengthening science education in schools, but one of the limiting factors for teaching science subjects in schools is the non-availability of the most basic equipment for use in demonstration and laboratory exercises.

Science classes are more interesting to students, Madam Speaker, when it comes to the practical part and having the proper resources and equipment for carrying out particular tasks which make discussions even more interesting.

Madam Speaker, when students are interested in the lesson, they will also be more eager to learn. Therefore, I urge the Honourable Minister for Education to ensure that all schools in Fiji are equipped with the necessary equipment and resources in order to carry out the practical classes and give an opportunity to learning, to all students who are taking science classes.

A major drawback, Madam Speaker, is the high cost of equipment and chemicals, and that the Ministry should monitor the prices in markets. What I am saying here is that, most students who take science classes are not doing well because the school does not provide the proper equipment and resources to enhance learning. In some schools the students are sharing equipment, Madam Speaker, or even go through a demonstration in class due to lack of resources. Some schools even lack school laboratories and conduct science classes in classrooms.

Also, Madam Speaker, there must be an alternate learning. There must also be a clear pathway in the curriculum from primary to secondary, to tertiary institutions and to the world of work. Secondly, if the Honourable Minister for Education is more serious in improving science classes and subjects in schools, then specialised teachers, as I had already mentioned, must be given scholarships to pursue further training in the area of science. Some teachers who are taking science classes in schools are underqualified, lacking the knowledge and skills because they are not given the opportunity to pursue further studies in tertiary institutions.

Madam Speaker, it is also important for the Honourable Minister and his Ministry to align the primary school curriculum as well in this area of learning, thus providing the equipment and resources and qualified teachers, as I had mentioned earlier.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister has promised in his Maiden Speech in this august House that he will call for an education summit to provide wider consultation with education stakeholders, who also have better ideas on the way forward in science education. This, he has not done. I, therefore, call on the Ministry of Education to consult unions, Madam Speaker, our universities, NGOs, principals and headteachers' associations and school management in this regard rather than dictating what needs to be done, especially when he is on unfamiliar grounds.

Madam Speaker, to brand all schools in the end for a declining trend is just an assumption. Some students and schools do extremely well in this area and they can be used by the Honourable Minister to highlight their success for other students to emulate.

Madam Speaker, a band-aid solution is the hallmark of the current Minister. Long lasting solutions are important, if the Ministry wants to be successful in this area.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Minister is asking me to sit down, so I will sit down.

(Laughter)

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I just want to quote one of Fiji's foremost attorneys, who was speaking at the Fiji Institute of Accountants Congress, Mr. Richard Naidu, and he said the following about education; "It has no vision, no plan, no consultation, no objective measure of quality."

What the Honourable Minister has done today, Madam Speaker, he chose a very important subject, and I agree that the decline in science education needs to be addressed, it is important. But what he has done as is done in the past as well, he has been tinkering around the whole curriculum in the education system. He has basically skirted around the issue and you do not do that when you want to change educational curriculum, Madam Speaker. This is why I keep emphasising a need for an education commission, we need to review, we need to understand why some of these things are happening, but all we are seeing is a stop gap measure and temporary measure in addressing issues as it comes.

I will tell you, Madam Speaker, I came through a science background. All of us in the 1970s, 1980s, right up to Form 6 used to do science and after doing science, we would branch in. When we came to the University of the South Pacific, we did Foundation Science and we did other subjects as well. So someone like me who never did economics in high school, actually ended up doing economics at the University. The real reason behind why the numbers have declined, is not coming out clearly from the Honourable Minister. He needs to look at the pathway. What is happening at the primary school level and what is happening at the secondary school level?

Students know that there are issues about getting science education, getting science degrees and then getting employment and getting into appropriated areas for their future. So, they know that when they get into Year 12 or Year 13 where they have a choice to go into a science stream or a social science stream, they obviously choose accounting, economics and more than that, Madam Speaker. While we are concerned about the decline in science education, we should also be concerned about the decline in social science education, in history, politics. Students are not going into those subject areas in the universities as well.

I think what we need to do, Madam Speaker, is to understand what the real reasons as to why this trend is there. I do not think that the Honourable Minister actually understands what has happened. All he does is, if someone says science numbers are going down, then he says; "Alright, we are going to go to the school, provide them this", et cetera. He does not know, the Ministry of Education does not understand the reasons behind why there is a decline, unless they have an explanation.

I will give you an example. He is not worried about what is happening even in the universities. Universities are running courses in cookery when they should be concentrating on science degrees, providing the support, providing the strategies to link the universities to what is happening in the high school, what is happening in the primary school. This is where he needs to

concentrate, and he cannot come out with a better strategy to enhance that, Madam Speaker, unless we, ourselves, in this Parliament understand what is happening. And we need some expert advice and the Honourable Minister needs expert advice, he is not an expert in education.

Madam Speaker, I have got one minute. I would encourage the Honourable Prime Minister to take this, show some leadership and have an education commission appointed, to understand what is happening right from pre-school to the university level. Otherwise, we are getting into some serious quality issues and a decline in the level of skills that we are going to have in this country in the future. It is not too late, Madam Speaker, for me to call on the Honourable Prime Minister to track the Honourable Minister for Education, to appoint the education commission so that we understand what is going on in this country in the education system. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. At this point, we will adjourn this proceeding for lunch. Please note that lunch is provided for Honourable Members in the Big Committee Room. Honourable Members of the Business Committee are reminded of our meeting in the Small Committee Room. Parliament will resume proceedings at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.38 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.32 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will continue from where we left off. I will now call the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations to deliver his statement.

Update on Occupational Health and Safety and Workers' Compensation Services in Fiji

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to deliver my ministerial address. This afternoon I will be providing an update on the work undertaken by the Ministry in terms of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and also workers' compensation services in Fiji. This is quite important this week because towards the end of this week, we will be celebrating World Occupational Health and Safety Day.

Madam Speaker, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has highlighted that every 15 seconds around the world, a worker dies from either a work-related accident or a disease, and every 15 seconds we have around 153 workers having a work-related accident. This is quite an alarming statistics. While we do not have these statistics for Fiji per se, that in itself is something of concern.

Every day, 6,300 people die as a result of occupational accidents or work-related diseases which are more than 2.3 million deaths a year. The ILO has estimated that the annual human cost and economic burden of poor OHS practices is approximately four percent of Global Domestic Product. So, that provides for us an indication of what we could say in terms of cost to GDP, if we are able to minimise and prevent workplace accidents and illnesses. So, this is something we need to create a lot of awareness on.

Here, in Fiji we have been undertaking a lot of reforms in the sector of Occupational Health and Safety. This resulted in 1996, in the enactment of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1996 and also the establishment of the National Occupational Health and Safety Service in 1998 under the then Ministry of Labour. This reform that took place during that period resulted in our replacing the outdated Factories Act 1971 and its Factories Inspectorate Agency, the changing of the operational management and systems and culture at that time. The National Occupational Health and Safety Service that we now have is certified to the ISO 90012008 Quality Management System.

The current legislation that we have, the Health and Safety at Work, provides us a way to be proactive in response to OHS and to prevent work-related accidents, injuries, diseases and deaths through training and awareness, and also gives us a framework to investigate such incidents when they do occur and prosecute if this is necessary.

From 2012 to 2016, the most reports of work-related incidents was in the area of injuries at work with a total of 5,674 cases. Over the same period, there were reported cases of 119 occupational diseases and 30 workplace-related deaths. So, in Fiji's context, this equates to approximately 94 workplace injuries occurring every month or three injuries per day, two workplace illnesses per month and one workplace death every two months. As a Government and as a society, this is something that we are concerned with and that we need to focus on.

We know that the prompt and early resolution of OHS issues and complaints will greatly reduce serious accidents and fatalities in the workplace in particular, where appropriate risk control measures are put in place. These measures will include awareness training, targeted inspections for high risk industries in particular, and enforcement through the issue of illegal notices and taking non-complying employers to court for breach of the law.

Madam Speaker, irrespective of the size or location of any organisation, workers in all industries are potentially exposed to workplace dangers that can threaten their health and safety. In some industries, the dangers are evident by way of exposure to harmful chemicals, fires, explosions and breakdown of machinery. These are just some of the health risks that workers can face at work.

In other fields of work, however, the health and safety dangers may not be so obvious. This maybe in cases of those who are working in an office or a restaurant which may seem harmless but poor ergonomics, food contamination and psychological stress can also cause health and safety problems that can hamper productivity.

Given that hazards are present in industries directly or indirectly, it becomes essential for organisations to provide health and safety training for their workers and to be updated on OHS knowledge on a regular basis. Madam Speaker, this OHS training is a legal requirement under the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1996, as part of the duty of employers to its workers so they are obliged to make sure that they provide that training for their workers.

The main objective of the training is for workplace stakeholders, including employers, self-employed persons, those in control of the workplace, the manufacturers, the suppliers and installers and the workers to understand their roles and responsibilities for each person in the workplace and their duty of care. Such training has to include a number of things:

1. The issue of best practice that stresses the importance to workers of the best work methods and procedures, whilst communicating to workers on the commitment the organisation has in regards to high performance standards.
2. Such training must cover and address the issue of compliance. This component enables the education of workers in industrial and enterprise agreements, ensuring that they are compliant with all the relevant laws, regulations and Codes of Practice.
3. It is an issue also of increasing productivity. This components focuses on the quality of work produced. It also increases the efficiency in which the task is completed. This is to reduce rework and save cost so that more time and effort can be placed on the job at hand.
4. Reduction of costs. This component focuses on reducing work-related injuries or accidents, reducing overall costs associated with the cost of injury, illness, death, damage to equipment, higher insurance premium, staff turnover and also delayed deliveries of products and services.
5. Risk management. This component focusses on the process of identifying, understanding and eliminating risks within the workplace.

Madam Speaker, the Fijian Government believes that education in OHS is an effective preventative tool, and that is why over the last five years, 555 trainings have been provided, covering almost 7,000 employees in different sectors. Government believes that educating workers on the basics of OHS and prioritising health and safety at the workplace can help reduce workplace accidents and injuries, saving organisations from costly financial and productivity losses.

Madam Speaker, in ensuring that OHS and Workers Compensation in Fiji is relevant and applicable, the Bainimarama-led Government has undertaken a number of amendments to the law. Firstly, compensation for work related deaths was recently doubled from \$24,000 to \$50,000, to ensure that dependents of a deceased worker are adequately catered for in light of economic and

social factors. Recently the laws on workers' compensation has been further amended to ensure that workers receive consistent medical assessments in work-related injuries and deaths as medical practitioners that carry out assessments must undergo the relevant training.

The amendment also allows for an expansion in the period of notifying an employer on a claim for compensation. This has been expanded from 12 months to three years, ensuring that workers are not prejudiced by time limitations. There is also allowance now that workers can apply for compensation, even after leaving their workplace. Further, demand notices can now be provided to employers to provide information and documents leading to swifter movement of cases for the benefit of the worker.

Another area in which improvement has been made is the recognition of occupational diseases. The list of occupational diseases has been reviewed, as the previous list had remained unchanged from the colonial era. The list of occupational diseases now captures new or emerging occupational diseases not previously captured in the law.

Madam Speaker, the new list includes a range of internationally recognised occupational diseases, as well for the first time, mental and behavioural disorders. At this juncture, it is important to highlight the need to move towards a more sustainable and fair Workers' Compensation Scheme that ensures social justice to all injured workers or to the dependents of workers who had lost their lives as a result of workplace accidents or disease.

Madam Speaker, under the current Workers' Compensation Scheme from 2012 to 2016, figures show that only 13.3 percent of the total injured workers in the private sector had received some form of monetary compensation. This compares quite poorly to the 83 percent for Government workers who are injured in the same period. In this same period in terms of death cases, only 6.4 percent of dependents of workers in the private sector had received compensation, compared to 53.4 percent of dependents of workers who work for Government. This is an area that we intend to address, to ensure that an equitable and viable system is implemented.

Madam Speaker, under the OHS, there is not enough awareness and understanding of the 'H' or Health in OHS - Occupational Health. It is often seen as synonymous with occupation safety but it is something that we need to make cognizance of and in particular, I think that something that we need to take particular concern of is the issue of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) that is infecting the impact of productivity of our workforce.

Here in Fiji, we have the second highest rate of diabetes in the world - 15.6 percent of adults, so it is affecting a significant portion of the people sitting in this room right now and also the people that we depend upon to work in the places in which they are occupied. The important thing about this is that, 80 percent of the NCDs are preventable, four out of five. High blood pressure is increasing, 30 percent of Fijians are obese and the worried statistics that I have seen that we have presented in a workshop which all Honourable Members of Parliament went to, is that 97 percent of all adults in Fiji have moderate or high risk of dying from NCDs. So it is something that is phenomenal in nature and something that we need to get to grips with.

His Excellency the President had related that the WHO had reported that the economic burden of Fiji from NCDs would amount to 443 million by 2030 if the trends continue and the biggest impact of this is on the productivity of labour and early deaths.

Madam Speaker, one other point that I wanted to highlight is the World Economic Forum which is a gathering of global business leaders, identifying the most severe threats to economic development in the world. They did not talk about the change in demand and technology and all of

these things but the World Economic Forum in 2010 identified and pointed to NCD as the most severe threat to economic development, not a severe threat but the most severe threat to economic development. Some studies have been shown in 2011 that a 2 percent decrease in NCD risks leads to 1 percent growth in our economy after a decade. So as we talked about OHS, we should pay special attention to the health of our workforce and this is something that all of us in our own individual capacities and in our own organisations need to pay attention to. It is not something that we can just let slide and hope that people make the right decision because the impact is going to be economic as has been highlighted by the points that I have just been making.

Madam Speaker, the last component of our labour reform that is due for modernisation is our Workers' Compensation Legislation. While the operation management system of the workers compensation services is ISO 90001:2008 certified, Government is committed to providing a swift and efficient process for the benefit of both, workers and employers.

Madam Speaker, this Government is committed to minimising employment injuries and occupational diseases, and on that premise it is envisaged that a Workers Compensation Scheme should support and encourage accident prevention, as decreased in workplace accidents, reduce expenses and entail high productivity improvement due to fewer work interruptions. The intended outcomes from the completion of the labour reforms at the enterprise and industry levels include:

- improved health and safety of workers;
- reduction of workplace risks and accidents;
- better productivity;
- higher workers' skills level;
- better quality of goods and services;
- good industrial relations;
- job satisfaction;
- proactive risk management skills;
- sustainable in-house OHS management system;
- improved overall management practice;
- increase in productivity and profitability; and
- creating employment opportunities.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I had highlighted in the beginning that this week, we will celebrate World Occupational Health and Safety day on 28th April, 2017. The theme for the celebration this year is, "Optimise the collection and use of occupational safety and health data". This mainly focuses on the critical need for countries to improve their capacity to collect and utilise reliable OHS data because if you can collect information and you cannot collect the data, you cannot manage it and that is absolutely critical.

The theme also deliberates on the contribution to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) which provides for the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. This focuses on the protection of labour rights and promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers in particular, women migrants and those in hazardous employment.

The Ministry together with the tripartite partners and the ILO, have organised celebrations in all three Divisions with the Northern Division, celebrating on 20th April, 2017; Western Division celebration which will be held on 26th April, 2017; and Central/Eastern Division which will be held on 28th April, 2017. I urge the Honourable Members and members of the public watching from home to mark the remaining dates and ensure that they participate, as this is an opportunity to raise

awareness on OHS on a national platform and examine ways in which we can offer better services to assist in the reduction of workplace accidents and deaths.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for the explanation given regarding the topic at hand which is Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), which is governed under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1996 and administered by the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations.

The Ministry's National Occupational Health and Safety Service (NOHSS) is responsible for the promotion of OHS and enforcement of the Act and its subsidiary legislation, and the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1964. According to the Ministry, Madam Speaker, the activities of the NOHSS are based on the concept of Duty of Care principles and promotes a proactive OHS risk management culture, emphasising the creed that those who create the risk in the workplace and those who work with them have the primary responsibility to solve them rather than relying on OHS Inspectors to prescribe the remedies as encouraged in the former statutory administrative arrangements under the Former Factories Act, 1971.

The legislation, Madam Speaker, has undergone a number of amendments. The Safety at Work 1996 commenced on 1st November, 1996 and the first amendment was done in the Act No. 18 of 1996. The second one was Act No. 14 of 2003, while the third was the Revised Edition of the Laws (Consequential Amendments) Act 2016 (No, 31 of 2016). In addition, Madam Speaker, the Ministry has the responsibility for the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1964.

Firstly, recent news reports on OHS issues in *The Fiji Times* dated 27th February, 2017 under the heading; "Labour and the Health Ministry Discuss Navua Hospital", it was reported that the Ministry of Employment was holding talks with the Ministry of Health after an OHS assessment at the Navua Hospital. We all understand, Madam Speaker, that there were so many defects at the Navua Hospital after it completed its construction.

Secondly, on 14th January this year, under the heading; "OHS team investigates building", it was reported that a team from the OHS Unit was conducting investigations into a building along the Waimanu Road, Suva, after a man fell off from the building and died after carrying out repair works on the building.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, from the *Fiji Village* on 2nd March this year, under the heading; "Nausori Town Council awaits clearance of dismantling of the old Nausori Market", it was reported that the Nausori Town Council was awaiting clearance from the National OHS services for the dismantling of the old Nausori market structure due to the health risk associated with the other asbestos in the old market. They have to liaise with the relevant authorities before it is removed.

Madam Speaker, it was reported that no timeframe has been given as to when the sight will be cleared for major development works to start. A \$40 million worth of complex by the Shop and Save Limited will be built at the sight. Some issues of major concerns at this stage, Madam Speaker, are: (1) - in terms of building standards, the Fiji national building code is outdated but the OHS laws and regulations are being applied.

My question to the Honourable Minister, Madam Speaker, any update of the progress of the review of the National Building Code has been done so far?

Secondly, does the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations have regular updates on the statistics on OHS, such as the accident at work places, incident of non-compliance, et cetera?

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, any information on hand of how much the Ministry has paid out under the Workmen's Compensation Act 1964 in the past 10 years, or since the enactment of this law?

Fourthly, for the Amendment of the Workmen's Compensation Act 1964

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you Honourable Member. I now call upon the Honourable Leader of the NFP, or his designate, to speak in response.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you Madam Speaker, I rise to contribute to the Ministerial Statement. I thank the Honourable Minister for outlining his statement on the amendments to the Act, and whilst the amendments are welcomed, the Ministry, in my view, needs to improve its compliance in dealing with private sector OHS concerns.

As you have noted from the Honourable Minister's statement, only 13 percent of the injuries or deaths have been compensated in the private sector, and it is a very alarming figure.

Madam Speaker, last year, I moved a motion on OHS in respect of the sugar mills and this motion was defeated by the Government, saying that the deaths are normal and compared them to normal deaths on roads. So, Madam Speaker, this is a very serious issue in our country and now we have issues of safety at mines, and I would like to concentrate my reply on mines.

OHS risk in the mines has to be brought under the national Occupational Health and Safety at Work Act. Workers must be given the legal right to refuse to work in what they consider to be risky and unsafe work environment. Workers and unions in the mines have been asking for Government's intervention in this matter but so far nothing has been done.

Madam Speaker, mining does not fall under OHS Act. The safety of the mines is under Mining Act Regulations. It is being handled by the Ministry of Mineral Resources and this has been the practice so far, Madam Speaker.

Just recently, we had a death in the mines. The mining shaft, where the accident occurred, was closed but it is of no consolation to the family who have lost their loved one, but we thank the Government for shutting down this shaft and carrying out a mining audit. Madam Speaker, it cannot stop there, it has to go further.

Every worker must have a right to refuse to work in a workplace that is considered unsafe. One of the features of the OHS Act is that workers can form workplace OHS Committees, this is essential in underground mining. These are the most vulnerable workers, working in most dangerous environments and should receive the most protection in terms of workplace safety and their rights to refuse to work in unsafe environments.

Workers are the best judges of hazardous workplaces. I have been told that workers at the mines have said, "Enough is enough," Madam Speaker, and they would like to say that they would want to be protected under the OHS Act.

With this, the other issue that comes to mind is the employer's contribution of 1 percent of gross wages to Fiji National University (FNU), which is a levy and I have asked the Honourable Minister perhaps in just a statement on how this levy is used; why is it with FNU; and whether any portion of it is used to train the workers, or is used to upgrade the OHS compliant environment? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Minister for Fisheries to deliver his statement.

Fisheries Development - Preparation towards the Ocean Conference

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to make a Ministerial Statement on Fisheries development, especially when Fiji is gearing up towards the Ocean Conference.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Fisheries needs to increase its activities as it pursues to accomplish what the Ministry has been mandated to perform and also make positive contributions to the Ocean Conference in June, as I have already alluded to.

Madam Speaker, I wish to emphasise that the Ministry continues to serve the people at all levels of our society. We have received responses from our stakeholders, acknowledging the initiatives taken to resolve policy issues that have challenged the ministry in order to improve and provide positive impacts. Appreciating that, we are also aware that there are opportunities to improve our services and the ongoing challenges faced in this sector, and the need to continue to motivate the industry.

Madam Speaker, I was honoured to be part of the Fiji delegation to the Preparatory Meeting in New York in February. The summit was a preparatory discussion towards the final conference in June that will be co-chaired by the Honourable Prime Minister. It was a call for action, which was to solicit support globally from countries to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. It is a call to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and maritime resources.

Madam Speaker, as Fiji continues to play this important role as co-President of the Conference, and now Fiji's Oceans Champion, we have recently completed preparing our regional approach and making voluntary commitments towards the main meeting in June.

It is a significant role for a small island country like ours to play. Fiji is mobilising the global community to transform our world and lead it towards actioning what the Honourable Prime Minister said at the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, and I quote:

"To act quickly and decisively to reverse the environmental degradation of our oceans and seas, and the reckless and irresponsible use of our precious resources."

In responding to this call, Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Fisheries has committed itself to lead the charge at national level in the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and at the same time manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems. The principle of "Fishes Management", which the Ministry of Fisheries adopts to

manage and govern Fiji's Marine and fishery resources has a long goal term of sustainable use of fish resources, which is aligned to SDG Goal 14, which are all interconnected.

The above values are also enshrined in the Green Growth Framework, which is a tool to accelerate integrated and inclusive sustainable development that inspires action at all levels in our country to build environmental resilience, social improvement, economic growth and build resilience to the anticipated adverse effects of climate change. This framework was commissioned by our Honourable Prime Minister in 2014. All Fisheries projects are aligned to these two means of guidance, which has been incorporated in the Ministry's short and long-term goals and initiatives.

Madam Speaker, the latest initiatives in Monitoring, Control and Surveillance is in the offshore fishing sector and has been Fiji's leading position in the region on regional solidarity under the FFA member countries have towards, especially in the aspect of monitoring and surveillance, to control fishing in the Pacific. Fiji strongly plays its part as an active combatant against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing phenomenon.

Madam Speaker, at present, officials with Fiji Fisheries have been participating in 3 major regional fisheries surveillance operations with the Fiji Navy, operating at Honiara. These operations include representatives and resources from the Defence cooperation counterparts from Australia, New Zealand, France and the United States, and in addition to the FFA member countries, to foster regional capabilities aimed at ensuring national food and economics security in the Western Central Pacific Ocean, which also includes the EEZ via the sustainable harvesting and effective management of the highly migratory tuna stocks.

At the national level, Madam Speaker, the Ministry continues to ensure the verification of vessels passing through Fiji's fisheries water via the analysis of the Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS). This is able to identify the adherence to the current legal systems and possibility of illegal fishing activities.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry is in the second year of a three-year trial period on the use of the Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) upon Fiji's domestic fishing fleet with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation. The project utilises the latest in video surveillance, viewing and analysing technology, whereby cameras are placed strategically on fishing vessels in order to assist in the monitoring of potential compliance matters to licensing condition and data gathering processes specific to fishing processes.

Madam Speaker, this additionally assist the industry stakeholders in ensuring that the proper fish handling procedures are maintained. Madam Speaker, as such, the Ministry is about to engage with the relevant industry participants for the advancement of this project. At present, there are a total of 9 vessels that have been outfitted with this equipment, and a further estimated twenty-one vessels to be outfitted in the next two months. A total of fifty Fijian long line vessels are to be outfitted with this technology at the end of the 3-year trial period. Data collected by this system are being analysed by Fisheries Observers and are entered in the national and regional databases.

Madam Speaker, the ministry continues to make progress in pursuit of cross-border fishing, and that is engaging regional counterparts whose Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) borders our waters, namely Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. This gives our Fiji flag vessels access into their waters to fish. The proposal is also to allow the tuna caught in their waters by our vessels to be brought back to Fiji and processed.

Madam Speaker, this is the way to operationalise what the Ministry of Fisheries Regulations 20 of the OFMR 2014, as it authorises our Fiji flagged vessels to fish beyond Fiji's fisheries waters. At presents, there are 10 vessels that utilise this authorisation and it allows the vessels the ability to fish within high seas and even in other EEZ, where that sovereign nations provides the licence.

Madam Speaker, in the same spirit of the cross-border intent, the ministry is making a move to participate in other Regional Fisheries Management Organisation, specifically in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, which looks after the Eastern portion of the Pacific Ocean. This will allow Fiji's flag vessels the ability to fish in other waters and to do so responsibly.

Madam Speaker, the inshore sector, entry is also controlled by licencing. Due to the changing operating environment, the ministry uses what comes out of the stock status through inventory surveys and had commissioned a survey on the process that has been completed by Packard Foundation Consultation. The recommendations of the review will be implemented in stages and that will assist officers to ascertain the number of licences for inshore areas.

Madam Speaker, the latest initiatives to control depletion of fish stock in addition to seasonal closures during spawning seasons will be the seasonal ban on the harvesting of beach-de-mer. This will further supplement the ban on UBA.

Madam Speaker, another addition to the initiatives to manage and sustain our inshore fisheries will be the adoption and implementation of another review by the Secretariat of the Pacific Control Division. The collaboration of the ministry with our NGO partners in the persistent strive to contribute to sustainable fishing continues, Madam Speaker.

The new initiatives is similar to the *kawakawa* and *donu* bans. The 'Set Size' campaign to be launched soon will further revitalise the adherence to catching of legal sized fish that is in our legislation. This will enhance our enforcement means, which is intended to create an impact on buyer and fisher folk as a whole, so that undersized is not caught and traded.

Madam Speaker, a major boost in our monitoring and surveillance for inshore fishes come through our collaboration with our donor partners, who had recently contributed in grant aid equipment. Through their kind assistance, the Korean Ocean and Fisheries International Cooperation handed equipment worth over US\$80,000 to boost mobility in our various divisions, that will enhance service delivery and especially monitoring control and surveillance activities.

Madam Speaker, the massive destruction of fishing habitats after *TC Winston* has disrupted and caused major changes in resource population and ecosystem shocks that had affected our inshore fish stocks. Our inshore fish resources needs to be built up the resilience of the habitats and the ministry has made progress in strategising to alleviate this.

The deployment of five Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) that had been done in the Province of Ra and this has been further enhanced with another 6 in the Northern Coast of Tailevu. This latest initiative will allow fisher-folks to continue to catch fish and at the same time allow affected reef stocks to recover.

Madam Speaker, I am appreciative of the fact that we had recently visited China and attended the Bio Economic Forum in which I presented a paper on Opportunities for Development and Investment in Fisheries. It attracted a lot of interest from investors and formed the basis of successive meetings between the Governor of the 2 provinces and our delegation.

Madam Speaker, the tour included visits to the Fisheries Universities and aquaculture set ups of the 2 provinces, which we were shown the hatchery culture of high valued species like giant groupers (*kavu*) and humphead wrasse (*varivoce*) species. We hope that this will initiate partnership and allow these species to be cultured in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, our China tour of duty culminating in my attendance of UNESCAP meeting, held in Bangkok from 30-31st March.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have shared further initiatives the ministry has achieved since the last session and also how the ministry continues to support the preparatory work towards the June Ocean Conference, where our PM will co-chair, as it will benefit our nation and the other Small Island Developing States. We have also made inroads in the Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) and Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS), and equally through our donor partners had given grants to boost our mobility and in assets to better our service.

The Ministry's continued assistance to the aquaculture sector as it is a major contributor to food security and economic development and is a climate change adaptation project.

We are also pleased to have shared our successful tour of duty to the Hainan and Guandong Provinces in China and highlighted issues to be incorporated into the Memorandum of Understanding. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Now, I call on the Leader of Opposition or her designate to speak in response.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his ministerial statement. Firstly, I would like to point out that Fiji's role as co-chair in the Ocean Conference to be held in June is very important. It is very important for Fiji to be seen to be committed as a leader of the Pacific Islands, and being the leader in the Pacific, Fiji should take the lead role in all aspects and issues of the Pacific.

I would like to point out that there are issues that recently had shown that to the contrary, especially unrelated to the Oceans is the PACER Plus, where Papua New Guinea and Fiji have opted out while the other islands have signed the PACER Plus. So that is another issue that questions Fiji's leadership in the Pacific.

The other one is the issue with the Papua New Guinea, in terms of importation of beef. Those are the issues that I would like to point out for Fiji to be portrayed in the international arena as the leader of the Pacific and reflective of what the Pacific Islands small nations want to bring up to the table in the world scene.

Domestically, for the ocean, we have issues in regard to pollution: trashing the ocean, overfishing, global warming, and various forms of pollution are damaging the ocean's ecosystems. In Fiji, as highlighted by the Honourable Prime Minister recently in his speech in regards to the wreckages all over Fiji.

So, Fiji has to be seen that it is doing its own work in Fiji, and I note also the elevation or the local scene of the Department of Environment. It has not been elevated to be a Ministry of its own so that it reflects the importance of environment in regard to ocean, if the Honourable Prime Minister is to be the co-chair of the Ocean Conference. So that is very important.

Fiji's voice on environment and climate change is as loud as its voice in the international arena, then surely you will see a full-fledged Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, it will be fully staffed and stocked up to match Fiji's international commitment to the Ocean Conference.

Issues that continue to be raised is the domestic policies, in terms of destruction of mangroves and land reclamation, destroying the natural habitat and ecosystem, the biodiversity and food chain, land-based development, lack of proper agriculture land-use management, resulting in millions of tonnes of soil washed into the river system during heavy rain and flooding, and eventually into the sea, destabilizing the balance of ecosystem of coastal fisheries and freshwater fisheries.

Then we think about the rubbish. Plastic has been highlighted in the ads, in the TV, where Epeli, Nimi and Koliaci are seen fishing out in the sea in Nasese and when they throw their fishing lines, they hold in plastics. That is not a good picture for Fiji to be highlighted, especially in the Ocean Conference. It gives a picture that Fiji is littered with plastics. So, what does the policy of the Government emphasise? Other African countries, Dafor, even New Delhi, they have banned plastics, but they had used plastics in the first place. Can Fiji, on the international arena, say that it is going to ban plastics because it litters the oceans?

So, those are the issues that should be portrayed in the international arena, if Fiji is to be of any relevance, to be credible, to be seen to be doing something domestically in its policies to address the ocean pollution, as well as the environment.

Fiji is a vibrant fishing and aqua-cultured industry. In Vanua Levu, there are 20 million tonnes of bauxite and it is going to destroy all the vibrant aquaculture in Vanua Levu, especially the pearl culture and recently it came in the newspapers, in Macuata, the red sea of the barrier reef in the Bai-ni-Vualiku area.

So, these are the issues that should be addressed before we go into the international arena so that we can portray Fiji to be domestically complying with maintaining the ocean environment as it should portray in Sweden, co-chaired by Sweden in the Ocean Conference. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Now, I call upon the Leader of the NPF or his designate to speak in response.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement.

Madam Speaker, like COP23, we support the Fiji's preparation for the Ocean Conference, and as I have said before, we must take ownership of these very important tasks that Fiji have been given, and I have already said that we support the Honourable Prime Minister Chairmanship of COP23 and Fiji's hosting of the Ocean Conference, but we must make sure that our people, our Ministers, our experts take charge, not contract it out to some consultants who are only out there to make money and Qorvis, in particular. So I put that warning to this House, Madam Speaker.

We also note, Madam Speaker, that the recent areas beyond national jurisdiction by Preparatory Committee also presents some opportunities to Fiji and to provide some leadership during the Ocean Meeting in June. I also hope that the Honourable Minister will ensure that these negotiations which are superimposed on Fiji's fisheries development will showcase, as Honourable Kiliraki has said, our leadership on ocean governance in the world and as a model or as an attempt to provide that good governance in terms of sustaining our ocean resources.

For starters, Madam Speaker, our fisheries licensing cap, I think, needs to be more closely examined, to ensure that our fishing effort is in sync with the signs that are required and reduced to a more sustainable level, otherwise the migratory species of tuna will be under immense pressure. And I note the Honourable Minister has pointed out some very good measures, particularly the VMS and the EVMS, and how he is planning to ensure that those measures are going to ensure our tuna sustainability.

However, Madam Speaker, I do want to caution that we need to look at this VMS, look at its effectiveness because I know, having done some work on fisheries and tuna in the Pacific that some of these monitoring mechanisms are not effective. Despite these on the policies, on the agenda of governments in the Pacific, we have continued to see the exploitation of tuna resources and other fisheries resources in a detrimental manner and I know the Honourable Minister understands this.

The other point that is very important, Madam Speaker, when we talk about sustaining our resources and I hope that the Honourable Minister is working on the Traditional Knowledge Cultural Expression Bill because the old issue of bio piracy, especially with respect to embryonic genetic resources is an important one as well. And if we are not careful, we may lose some of these in the process and these resources would never be expansively recorded and robustly protected, so we need to ensure that as well.

One last point I want to make, Madam Speaker, I know that the Honourable Minister can already see this nexus in the negotiations pertaining to the BBNJ and, of course, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Nagoya Protocol. I think these mechanisms are also very important when we are taking this ahead.

With climate change now as a threat multiplier, Madam Speaker, on land, sea and air, it is not an issue which is confined to some specific areas. We simply cannot rest on our laurels and we must effect as much as we can in terms of ensuring that our domestic capacity and building that capacity in terms of understanding the intricacies of the management of ocean resources and management of climate change impact adaptation is very important.

Madam Speaker, that is why I want to re-emphasise again and again that this is an opportunity for Fiji to capture that moment to enhance its local capacity, both at the executive level and at the civil service level, and with the private sector as well. That, Madam Speaker, would require very, very collective effort both, in COP23 and in hosting the Oceans Conference. Only then I think we can be sure that we are going to get the appropriate rewards and the benefits from engaging in such international undertakings which are very important for Fiji and the Pacific.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Members, that brings to an end all Items in today's Order Paper, and I thank you for your participation.

Parliament is now adjourned until 9.30 tomorrow morning.

The Parliament adjourned at 3.24 p.m.