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**THURSDAY, 27TH APRIL, 2017**

The Parliament met at 9.38. a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

**PRESENT**

All the Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services; the Honourable Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports; and the Honourable P. Singh.

Birthday Wishes – Honourable Prime Minister

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament, let me acknowledge and wish our Honourable Prime Minister Happy Birthday.

(Acclamation)

**MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Wednesday, 26 April 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 today's sitting of Parliament and the members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching proceedings on television, internet and listening to the radio.

I also would like to welcome our friends from Lautoka who continue to come all the way from there to join us in the gallery and they are here again today, we welcome you. So, all our friends who are here; a very warm welcome to you.

Mai Kana Cookbook

For the information of Honourable Members, Leader of the Government in Parliament has brought copies of the *Mai Kana Cookbook*. If you are interested in investing in your health, I would encourage you to purchase a copy the Ministry of Agriculture is selling this at \$50. Thank you.

**POINT OF ORDER**Tabling of Written Response

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I just want to raise this issue about my written question to the Honourable Minister for Forests on which he promptly tabled a reply yesterday which I am really grateful for, but the content of the report has not totally addressed the question that I raised, Madam Speaker. It is just referring to other agencies to look into it, which the people of Emalu in Draubuta have been hearing for the last five years.

Madam Speaker, I want something definitive as per my question and exactly how much is due being one of those issues. Can I just table this, Madam Speaker, so that the Honourable Minister could respond to this accordingly? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will note to make the amendments as required.

Inclusion of Motions on the Order Paper

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to raise a point of order according to Standing Order 46(3) and may I read:

“The Secretary-General must include a motion on the Order Paper unless the Speaker determines it is inadmissible under Standing Order 48.”

Madam Speaker, as we may be aware, from Monday we had a motion on the Order Paper and it was taken away, and on Tuesday and Wednesday, we also had motions submitted but it was not considered. So I am raising this point of order that it is out of order not to include a motion from this side of the House, as in accordance to Standing Order 46(3). Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I wish to respond to that.

Madam Speaker, motions when they come, they come through the Business Committee. Standing Order 125(1) specifically states that in the Business Committee proceedings, it is on unanimity or near-unanimity and that has been sorted out in the Business Committee.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Under the point of order process, the point of order had been raised and response has been given.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This matter is a point of order and it relates to that. I am raising this under Standing Order 18 which says that the Office of the Speaker should be independent as well and as you go to Standing Order 18(2) - independent and must be impartial. Impartial means no interference from that side, near-unanimity is not there. The final say is the Speaker. This relates to my motion. I have a motion which I am asking this House to set up a bipartisan Committee to look into the 17 or so Decrees that affect indigenous people. This is very important because this was not passed. All these legislations were simply put into this Constitution, never debated and I know that the reason why it has been taken out because of the interference from that side. So, I am asking you, Madam Speaker, to please direct that side of the House not to interfere with the independence of the legislature because it makes it look bad and that is what they have been doing.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Attorney General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Nawaikula is quoting Standing Order 18 which talks about the Speaker's function, jurisdiction powers and he talks about subsection 3.

(Honourable Members interject)

Please do not interfere, I am addressing Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, he refers to Standing Order 18(3) and it says that the Speaker "must act impartially, and without fear, favour, or prejudice."

He is traversing on very soft ground there because he is questioning your impartiality; implicitly that is what he is doing.

Madam Speaker, they held a press conference yesterday, issued a statement under the name of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. The Honourable Leader of Government had already issued a statement. If you read the statement, Madam Speaker, that the Honourable Leader of Government has issued, he talks about these matters that are brought before the Business Committee: motions, petitions and questions are under the purview of the Business Committee, and we respect the impartiality and Madam Speaker being the final arbiter in making the decisions. That is what happened, Madam Speaker.

He is going about and referring to a particular clause, Standing Order 18(3) that talks about your independence, impartiality and he is imputing that we are interfering with your impartiality and your independence. Explicitly that means, Madam Speaker, that you have succumbed and given up doing impartiality and given up your independence. That is what it means. Logically that is what it means, now logic is something that has lost on them. The fact of the matter is what it means logically.

I suggest, Madam Speaker, that Members on the other side of the House traverse very carefully in using Standing Order 18(3) as a ground to bring out this very obscure and very skewed approach today on the motions, petitions they bring. A lot of the motions that they are bringing, we have to correct the basic English, grammar, and they go against the provisions of the Standing Orders - a lot of their fall. They do not understand that, Madam Speaker. Several times we are pointing at that, even the NFPs are not far away from that.

We have an Honourable Member yesterday talking and he had a wrong name in the actual question time and he stands up here now and tries to amend it. This is the calibre of motions, petitions and questions being put to the Business Committee. We could be very technical and try to knock everything out.

So, Madam Speaker, the point is, they are using Standing Order 18(3) to question your impartiality and your independence which is completely wrong.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I agree with you. My impartiality is guaranteed when the rules per the Standing Order are followed and the Business Committee, when scrutinising motions and questions, there are rules that need to be followed. These have been the deciding factor in accepting or non-acceptance of motions and questions put before the Business Committee before it is approved and put in the Order Paper of today.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Can I just highlight Standing Order 48 on this, Madam Speaker? Inadmissible motions, can it be given some guidelines on what is inadmissible about our motions? When we look at these four conditions on inadmissible motions, we believe all our motions qualify,

but we are told we are not. Can someone tell us where exactly we are going wrong, please? We come to Parliament, prepared with mountains of work to come and debate in this House and they are all deemed to be inadmissible. We are really lost, Madam, this week has been the most strenuous, the most restrictive week we ever seen in this Parliament, Madam Speaker. Can someone tell us exactly where it is inadmissible? We have met all the criteria, we believe, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The issue will be addressed later and we will let you know. I know that we had lengthy discussions on your motion and because of this, we are going to hold a special workshop to train Honourable Members of Parliament on how to formulate motions ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- ... based on the Standing Orders. It is apparent that we need to have this workshop, just another one day's meeting and when we have this meeting, please allow everyone to attend. We will address how to formulate your motions and questions, and then we will not have this problem again. Thank you. Point of Order!

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Under Standing Order 60 – “Speech must be relevant”. The relevancy here, Madam Speaker, we had the press conference yesterday because our voters had been enquiring as to what is happening to the petitions and motions that they had brought forward for us to debate in the House. They knew that it would come through the Business Committee and they were wondering as to what had happened because yesterday was Wednesday and they knew that it is almost the end of the week and nothing had come up in terms of their petitions, which hundreds of them have signed and also the motions that have been brought to the House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Business Committee membership is from both Government and the Opposition and the decision is made by the Business Committee, as you are all aware of, including the Honourable Members of the Opposition that sit in the Business Committee and the onus is on them to respond to such questions from your voters. Thank you.

Today we have six Oral Questions, three from the Opposition and three from the Government, as agreed to by the Business Committee and I now call on the Honourable Ro Temumu Kepa to ask her question.

## QUESTIONS

### Oral Questions

Sunken Derelict Ships - Suva Harbour  
(Question No. 123/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport explain what the Ministry is doing about the sunken derelict ships in Suva Harbour, Madam Speaker? I believe 29 had been identified by the people of the *tikina* of Suva that in Suva Harbour they are posing a danger to maritime navigation

and are the cause of much pollution from the deteriorating hulls to the unknown nature of their cargo, as well as the release of fuel and oil into the maritime environment.

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 Leader of the Opposition and I also thank her for asking the question.

At the outset, Madam Speaker, anything to do with ports and harbour is under Fiji Ports Corporation Limited. It is under the Seaport Management Act 2005 and Seaport Regulation 2008 and directly falls under the Minister for Public Enterprises. This is another correction, Madam Speaker.

Nevertheless, Madam Speaker, if there is an incident within a port boundaries such as grounding or sinking of vessels then this is reported to MSAF and then MSAF will notify the ship owner to immediately remove any fuel or harmful substance from the ship.

Madam Speaker, MSAF Pollution Officer will check to ensure that this is carried out. Madam Speaker, any pollution incident arising out of any incident within the port boundary Fiji Ports Corporation Limited as the Ports operator is the first responder.

Madam Speaker, MSAF's responsibilities to monitor, respond and provide additional equipment and workforce if Fiji Ports Corporation Limited's capacity is insufficient to contain and clean up the oil spill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. A supplementary question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Does he look up the window when he comes into Suva Harbour to see all those rubbish? Can he please assure this House that by December all these will be gone?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P. B. KUMAR.- It was unfortunate I was not here yesterday because I was told that some people want to legalise marijuana.

(Laughter)

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, as I have said, let us be reasonable about it that anything to do with ports harbour, even if you have to dance, you have to get permission from Fiji Ports Corporation Limited as comes under Fiji Ports Corporation Limited. I can direct this to Ports Corporation Limited on the matter that has been raised. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Standing Order 81 to correct a misrepresentation. The allegation from the other side he said "I stood for the legalisation of the consumption of marijuana".

(Honourable Government Members interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Let me make it clear it would be foolish of me as a grandfather and as a parent to say that to legalise the consumption. What I insisted yesterday was to legalise the commercial farming because they are products and the Honourable Minister for Agriculture can inform us. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you for the clarification. Honourable Gavoka, is it a point of order?

HON. SPEAKER.- Is it a point of order?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- A supplementary question. It is always difficult asking the Honourable Minister questions because he does not answer or he blames another ministry, truth to tell, Madam Speaker, we do not know who to approach on that side because there is one guy holding seven or eight ministries, why do not just have one each because there are so many of them so that we know who to talk. From Monday he has been saying that we are addressing the wrong person, we do not know anymore, Madam Speaker.

My question, Madam Speaker, few days ago as PTO have said that out of all the ports in the Pacific for cruise liners, the port in Fiji are very ugly compared to Vanuatu and New Caledonia and this is affecting cruise liners. He is saying direct the questions somewhere else, can he direct people in the agency, together with the ministry, to make Suva presentable for cruise liners passengers? Few days ago, huge study saying that we have our ports are not suitable for cruise liner passengers: containers, derelicts ships everything is here that makes Suva such an unattractive destination?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me respond to him on the first part of his question that is in regards to that I am trying to dodge away from questions - that is not the truth. The problem with these Opposition Members, they do not know what to ask to who.

(Laughter)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- This is the real problem and this has been happening from Monday and this press conference will not solve your problem.

(Laughter)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- You have to solve your problem here, not outside. Madam Speaker, as I have said earlier on that in regards to the pollution, MSAF is responsible after the matter is reported by the Fiji Ports Corporation Limited.

Madam Speaker, there have been some cases reported to MSAF, they have investigated and gradually the investigation report reveals that it needs to be removed, and as I have said earlier on that in terms of removal, it comes directly under Fiji Ports Corporation Limited. So I will definitely take this to Fiji Ports Corporation Limited.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, in regards to the environment and the toxic materials that are there in the harbour, which are contaminating the fish and the shellfish that people eat, his response to my question is not addressing this particular issue of the toxic materials in regards to the food that the people are eating from that area.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The information that I have from MSAF is that there were few cases in relation to what the Honourable Leader of Opposition has raised. They have taken out the water samples to the lab and there were some cases where owners were given notices. In some cases, there were no fuel or oil really despite the complaint and that is what the investigation report reveals.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Parmod Chand.

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Speaker, supplementary question. I thought the Honourable Minister is also the Minister for Environment, maybe he has forgotten about that. So I would like to ask him if he can inform the House if there are legislations and laws in place to remove such debris and sunken ships from our ports by the owners. If there are none, are there any plans for the Government to put in laws and measures that the owners of the vessels will be able to remove their vessels by law?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, I must confirm to this House that I am the Minister for Environment but the problem with this Honourable Member is that he thinks too much.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Let us hear the Honourable Minister, please.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- No, they will not listen and after that they will spring up.

Madam Speaker, during my response I have clearly stated that in terms of removal, it comes under Fiji Ports Corporation Limited, I cannot and will not comment on the responsibility of other Ministries.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, again since the Honourable Minister has answered the principal question, I assume that he has taken over also the MSAF responsibility in regards to the question. In the seamen's jargon that Suva Harbour is a ship hospital because as you go from the Tamavua River mouth, there are lots of vessels that are tied up for years, and it is also called the graveyard because of the sunken vessels of 29 and the Suva harbour is well known for breeding the ecosystems in the fisheries sector. Is there any assessment in regards to the fisheries aspect of this environment been done to be able for the owners to be compensated?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, as far as I am concerned and I stand to be corrected, there has been no complaint in terms of what the Honourable Member has raised and there has been no investigation done to that.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other questions, I will now give the floor to the Honourable Semesa Karavaki to ask his question.

Jetty Relocation - Tubou Village  
(Question No. 124/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure & Transport advise this House what is the progress on the relocation of the jetty from Tubou Village?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure & Transport).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, the management of FRA's jetties and bridges require an integrated approach across Fiji and this is implemented through existing FRA construction contracts for East Division. The FRA has had challenges in attracting contractors and so the jetties have been packaged into larger contracts based on similar locations to make the contracts more attractive to potential contractors.

Madam Speaker, there are two phases in the maintenance and relocation of the jetty on Lakeba Island. The first phase will include the repair of sections of the existing jetty that was badly damaged during the *TC Cyclone Winston* as part of FRA's maintenance programme. Madam Speaker, with regards to the decision to relocate the jetty, this will form part of phase two and the investigation process is underway.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Supplementary question. I understand, Madam Speaker, that survey had already been done and completed and the recommendation had already been given. How long will it take for those recommendations to be actually implemented?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, he is quite right in saying that there have been recommendations. The new location has been identified and as I have said, the investigation is underway. The scope of works include mapping of sea floor topography, a wave study, geotechnical and topography surveys.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There being no other question, I will now give the floor to the Honourable Mikaele Leawere to ask his question.

Certificate Course in Commercial Farming - FNU  
(Question No. 125/2017)

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

The Certificate Course in Commercial Farming conducted at FNU commenced in 2014 and now it has stopped. Students were promised a piece of land and \$75,000 as operating funds.

Can the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts inform this House the current status of this programme?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts).- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for asking this question. Before I explain, I just want to make a correction. It says in the second sentence that "students were promised a piece of land and \$75,000 as operating funds", that is not correct. The \$75,000 was a loan to be organised by the Government through Fiji Development Bank (FDB).

Madam Speaker, as a background to this programme, in 2013, following the budget announcement in December 2012, the Government established a commercial agriculture programme, where FNU would run this programme and then Government would assist in providing a piece of land and funds through FDB to establish commercial farms.

Madam Speaker, the project came about because over the years, students who did agriculture at the then Koronivia Agriculture College and now under FNU, all of them wanted to become agriculture science teachers, loans officer, quarantine officer, extension officer and the country was void of commercial farmers, the Minister of Agriculture will vouch for that. So the idea was to introduce students who would want to become commercial farmers and take them in this programme. Government provided funding to FNU and FNU would run this programme. Over the two-year period, 2013 and 2014; a total of 73 students successfully completed the programme; in 2013, 49 students; and in 2014, 24 students; so a total of 73 students. In 2015, the 43 students are now under attachment, they are doing their practical attachment. This year, there are 25 students so gradually, interest in this programme is declining.

Madam Speaker, the question is, the arrangement for the 73 students who had successfully completed the programme. Of this 73 students, some students have gone and found job elsewhere but the remaining students, we are now talking to the Ministry of Lands, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the iTaukei Lands Trust Board (iTTLTB) to organise land. The Honourable Minister for Land said that there is some land in Navua and once the land is organised, we would then organise funding through the Fiji Development Bank (FDB).

Madam Speaker, the idea is to advertise and call for the expressions of interest for the students who had successfully completed the programme (73 students), to come forward and list whether they really want to get into this programme because some of them have gone back and started working on their own farm, some have started their career in other areas because subsequently, they probably realised that that scenario is better.

Again the problem is that, we are really not getting people who truly have commercial agriculture in mind. We do not want, Madam Speaker, to go back for them to do subsistence farming. The whole idea of the programme is to contribute a small cadre of commercial farmers every year, who will treat agriculture as a commercial venture and, therefore, solve the issue that we are facing now of having smallholder farmers. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Leawere?

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; was there any feasibility study or research conducted before the programme rolled out?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. DR.M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the feasibility study done was generally to gauge where our College of Agriculture graduates are going. As I had alluded to earlier on, most of them went to look for employment in the formal labour market rather than serving the initial intended purpose of the existing agriculture programme, the Diploma in Tropical Agriculture and Bachelor of Agriculture, which was to churn out commercial farmers who treat agriculture as a commercial industry. So it was based on that, that Government then asked the Fiji National University (FNU) to establish a programme which will train them as commercial farmers. They could take an option into crop agriculture or livestock agriculture which was the two options then, and then they will be given assistance to go and establish their own commercial farming with the support from the Ministry of Agriculture. Thank you.

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

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker; I thank the Honourable Minister for his explanation. The programme is a good one, and we noted this morning

that after completing the programme many of them went back to their villages to do their own farming. The question to the Honourable Minister is; were they being advised right from the beginning as to what is available to them after completing this programme?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. DR.M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, yes, they were and they were told that Government will assist in providing land. But the problem is, if a student comes from Seqaqa, he wants to go back to Seqaqa and want a piece of land in Seqaqa.

HON. RATU S.V. NANOVO.- (Inaudible)

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

If someone comes from Rakiraki, he/she would want to go back to Rakiraki and want a piece of land in Rakiraki. That was another problem until now, that while iTLTB and the Ministry of Lands were saying; “Look, this is the parcel of land available”, they always wanted to go back to their comfort zone, so that became a problem.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Dulakiverata?

HON. J. DULAKIVERTA.- Madam Speaker, now that you have 73 students who graduated from this programme, how many blocks of land have you got available for these people to move into to start their commercial farming?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. DR.M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I suggest to the Honourable Member that he table a written question to the Honourable Minister for Lands and Minister responsible for....

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- (Inaudible)

HON. DR.M. REDDY.- *Wawa, wawa!* No,no! Again, Madam Speaker, they do not know who is in charge of which portfolio.

Again, as alluded to earlier on by my colleague, they do not know who is responsible.

(Hon. Opposition Member interjects)

HON. DR.M. REDDY.- Look, I am in charge of Education, Heritage and Arts portfolio. So, you give your written question and I will ask my colleague, the Honourable Minister for Lands to respond. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Honourable Minister is admitting here that it was a failure. It is a failure! The programme is a failure. The interest is declining, 43, and it is because he asked the wrong people. So could he inform this House, what measures will he now put in place to bring incentive and especially, will he be consulting with the Ministry of Agriculture, will be consulting with Navuso Agriculture School and Tutu Training Centre, who are the experts? Not you!

HON. DR.M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the first step is, we will ask FNU to get data on the students and ask them come forward, if they want to continue with commercial agriculture. On the other hand, I have spoken to the Honourable Minister for Lands to look at what is available. He has already identified, I think, 300 acres of land in Navua. I will also talk to iTLTB and see what is in their Land Bank to make parcels available.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki?

HON. RATU. K.KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; I know that recruitment was done in villages in Naitasiri and young men were recruited. My question is; what is the qualification for the entry into this programme?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. DR.M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, my feeling is that it was pegged at Level 2 and the entry requirement was completion of Year 12. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will now move on to the next question and I give the floor to the Honourable Mataiasi Niumataiwalu to ask his question.

Accessing Climate Finance  
(Question No. 126/2017)

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

Access to Climate Finance is something Fiji and small vulnerable States have been trying to access for over a long period of time through the Conference of Parties. Just a week ago, we had the high level Pacific Islands Dialogue on Building Resilience to Natural Disaster and Climate Change. Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications inform this House as in what ways can we gain access to Climate Finance?

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

Before I delve into some of the areas of accessing finance, Madam Speaker, the Government believes, as do many other countries are now beginning to see, that climate finance actually equates the development finance. We cannot make that artificial distinction between climate finance and development finance because the reality is that any matter to do with adaptation, in particular for countries like Fiji with very low carbon footprint, actually is a development issue because adaptation means that you have an erosion of your infrastructure essentially because of the impact of climate change. So whether it is your roads or your bridges or encroaching seas and, therefore, you need to do seawalls or whether it is to underground your electrical cables so that every time a cyclone comes, poles do not get blown down and you put it back up again and it gets blown down again. So we see climate finance as development finance.

In terms of accessing this finance, Madam Speaker, as the Honourable Member has highlighted that we have had this meeting that was held by IMF in respect of the high level meeting on Pacific Dialogue on Building Resilience to Natural Disasters, building resilience to natural disasters, of course, means having proper systems and infrastructure in place so that you do not get affected as much by climatic events.

Madam Speaker, climatic events, of course, as the Honourable Minister for Agriculture will tell you, can be an ongoing issue. It can affect the seasons in which you now plant your seeds for agricultural purposes. It affects your rain patterns. Of course, it also means, single climatic events as we saw last year during *TC Winston*. These climatic events are now becoming more erratic, more severe in the manner in which it now affects us, so all of these combined, Madam Speaker, means that we as countries that are vulnerable at a cold face of climate change, we need to be able to cater for this and we need to adapt to this. Adaptation, Madam Speaker requires money.

To give you a case in point, Madam Speaker, those people who have actually been to the highway that is built out at Nadi Airport going towards Naisoso and, of course, now going through Namaka and Martintar, one thing that is quite obvious is that, there are no overhead cables. The electrical cables are all underground, the telecom cables are all underground, the waterpipes, Madam Speaker, traditionally in Fiji when they built roads, they put the waterpipes underneath the road. So every time there is a water leakage, you dig up the road, you fix the pipe but the road is not fixed or if there is a small leakage, no one knows there is a leakage. The water keeps on spilling inside underneath, the ground becomes soft and we continue to get potholes.

Madam Speaker, to be able to ensure that we can move these pipes to the side of the road, to get the underground cabling of the electrical cables and the telecom cables, puts an added cost to your bill, a cost in excess of about \$20 million simply to do the electrical cabling. But the reality is, Madam Speaker, that next time there is a cyclone, there is no electrical cables to get blown down. In *TC Winston*, 6,000 kilometres of electrical cables went down, it is a very large area.

Now, we put all those electrical cables up, God forbid, if we have another cyclone next year, the cables will go down again, and we will build them up again. Then there is another cyclone, it will go down again, then we build it up again. So we need to be able to have a long term goal, so we need to be able to build that resilience into our infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, accessing finance for these purposes, of course, is limited. The World Climate Finance, the pledge of \$100 billion dollars as we saw that recently a stocktake was done, in fact, about 80 per cent of those funds, Madam Speaker, a skewed towards mitigation, not adaptation.

Mitigation is a lot more attractive, it attracts a lot more innovation, technological advances, scientific advances, for example, companies have now developed a lot of technology in respect to reducing carbon footprint. But on the other hand, there is very little interest in adaptation finance.

Adaptation finance, Madam Speaker, is generally seen as where the public sector or the public finance is come into use. This is a major challenge for all countries in particular, the small vulnerable countries that need to access finance to be able to build that resilience to build what you call climate finance.

Madam Speaker, the sources of funding, of course, are numerous, it can come from different sources, it can come from the World Bank, it can come from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and, of course, can also come from the Green Climate Fund.

The Green Climate Fund is specifically set up for that, it is based in Korea. And recently, Fiji was the first country to be able to access the Green Climate Fund for adaptation purposes which is the Suva-Nausori water route system. It is a project worth about \$300 million that is going to be implemented on a period about four years or so, and \$32 million of that, Madam Speaker, is coming by way of a grant from the Green Climate Fund.

We are yet to be able to draw down this funds, because you have to actually go through an approved accredited agency by the Green Climate Fund. The accredited agency is ADB, so we went through ADB to be able to get this grant of \$32 million. They have to sign a Master Agreement and we hope that they will be doing it in the next two weeks so we can draw down upon the \$32 million, Madam Speaker. I will stop my comments there.

HON. SPEAKER. - Thank you. Supplementary question, Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA. – A supplementary question; can the Honourable Minister advise the House, in the last three years, how much has Fiji successfully obtained for climate funding and for what programmes? In addition to those \$300 million that you have stated, what is the total and for what programmes?

HON. SPEAKER. - Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Madam Speaker, I did not quite get the question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA. – The question again; in the last three years, how much has Fiji successfully obtained for climate funding and for what programmes?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Madam Speaker, it is not \$300 million. The \$300 million is the total project cost, of which ADB is providing the loan. Of that \$300 million, \$32 million is coming through the Green Climate Fund, so it is what you call a Blended Finance Approach. Blended finance means that you have different sources of funding to be able to complete a project.

If the Honourable Nawaikula wants statistics on that, he can put a written question and we can give him the figures on that. Thank you.

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

Exit Strategy - RFMF Soldiers in the Middle East  
(Question No. 127/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Defence and National Security inform the House on the exit strategy that the Republic of Fiji Military Forces has in place for our soldiers serving in the Middle East, should tensions escalate to a level that threatens the safety of our people in Mission areas?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA (Minister for Defence and National Security). - Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I would like to thank him for his question.

Just for the information of the House, let me mention here the number of our soldiers in different locations in the Middle East. In UNAMI Iraq, we have 168 soldiers; UNDOF Syria - 288; UNIFIL Lebanon - 146; MFO Sinai – 201; UNMISS South Sudan – 5; UNTSO Israel – 3; a total of 811 soldiers in the Middle East.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government has in place Mission Specific Exit Strategies for all our overseas Missions where our troops are served in, be it under the auspices of the United Nations or the Multinational Force and Observer Mission in Sinai. These exit strategies are pre-

planned means of executing and withdrawing our troops from a situation that is likely to become difficult and untenable from a safety and security perspective.

These plans are shaped by the Missions themselves in consultation with our Defence Force Headquarters, and other troop-contributing countries. The Fiji Government, through the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) will continue to ensure its troops' safety and security remain a priority.

A continued Force Protection Enhancement, like the recent acquisition of the Bushmaster APCs is one such initiative to mitigate the ever-changing threats in the areas or operations where our troops served. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. J.N. KUMAR. – A supplementary question, Madam Speaker; can the Honourable Minister inform the House if there are plans in place to identify staging areas or safe havens for our troops close to the Mission areas?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA. - Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for that supplementary question. Yes, we have existing exit strategies or plans within the Missions overseas with the UN and also with the MFO that is initiated on the Missions reaching minimum Operating Security Standards or a minimum tenable safety and security threshold before the exit strategy is initiated. These plans kick in when a situation becomes difficult and unsafe for the troops on the ground and they need to be extricated, and is determined by the Mission's Force Headquarters or the organisational Headquarters for the UN in New York or MFO Headquarters in Rome.

We also monitor the situation on the ground by our ground commanders and can initiate this extrication process ourselves, if we feel there is a need to do so. In other case, the organisation we serve has an obligation to get our troops home by pre-determined Mission plans and with Fiji's assistance and support.

Madam Speaker, the RFMF does not have a strategy heavy lift for sea or air capability that allows us the flexibility and a leeway for or have an institutional exit strategy for our troops and personnel of the troops in the Middle East. In this regards, Madam Speaker, we have to rely on the organisations we serve under. However, our Head of Missions have already engaged some positive dialogue with our bilateral partners and expediting with PRUN's assistance, a forward logistic base or staging areas which can also be used as a safe haven for our troops in the Middle East.

Just for the information of the House, Madam Speaker, I was speaking to the Qatari Minister of Defence on Tuesday night, and he is willing to have a Defence Co-operation Agreement signed between Fiji and Qatar and that Qatar can also be a safe haven for our troops in the Middle East. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, when we think about troops in the Middle East, we think about 2014 when they were held hostage, when their position was overwhelmed by terrorists.

Madam Speaker, the Middle East is such that we need to align ourselves to the umbrella of a country or of a power that has the fire power bigger than the players in the Middle East. In Iraq, you

must come under the Americans. In the Sinai and Lebanon, you must come under the Israelis. The UN does not have the fire power to match the terrorists in those areas, so we would be comforted by knowing that our Government is in dialogue in a bilateral manner with some of those powers of the US and in Israel for the protection of our troops. Can you, please, give us that assurance, Honourable Minister?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- I thank the Honourable Member. Yes, we do have bilateral relations with these governments, with Israel and also with the United States of America as you know, Honourable Member. As I mentioned just a few minutes ago, we are working with Qatar.

You referred, Honourable Member, to the capture of our 45 soldiers in 2014. It was this Minister, the Minister for Defence of Qatar, who was the Foreign Minister at that time, that we sought assistance from, and that he was willing to help in the negotiation in the release of our soldiers. He is now the Defence Minister of Qatar. I was just speaking to him on Tuesday night, he is now willing to look at Qatar to be the safe base for our soldiers or peacekeepers in the Middle East.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for briefing the House on the exit strategy for our soldiers and those in the overseas Missions.

Being the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, you may be aware of this case. On humanitarian ground can the Honourable Minister include an exit strategy for about five Fiji nationals who are female nurses and had gone to Dubai for employment opportunities, unfortunately had fallen prey to the lone sharks and are in prison right now?

HON. SPEAKER.- The onus is on the Honourable Minister to answer the question.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Speaker, I think that is a different issue and it has nothing to do with the Ministry of Defence, but if I may just say that, that is with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other question, I now give the floor to the Honourable Lt. Col. Netani Rika to ask his question.

Offshore Fisheries Sector – Monitoring, Control and Surveillance  
(Question No. 128/2017)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries enlighten the House on what the Offshore Fisheries Division of the Ministry's latest initiative in monitoring, control and surveillance in the Offshore Sector?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU (Minister for Fisheries).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I thank him for the question.

There are four tiers of monitoring within the Offshore Fisheries, two are the traditional aircraft and vessels surveillance on our Exclusive Economic Zone. Secondly, we have on board each fishing vessel an Observer who carries out inspection while the vessel is out at sea fishing.

The recent introduction is the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and this is monitored in Honiara. The second one is the electronic monitoring system. These are units that are installed

onboard ships and they basically take video shots of activities onboard ships, and make sure that the handling of fish are in accordance with the requirement that are laid out internationally.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; can the Honourable Minister advise this House as to the breaches in illegal fishing and the capturing of those illegal fishermen who operate within the EEZ in regards to the four initiatives that they have for monitoring?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, as I had alluded to, now Fiji and the Pacific Islands are in a very good position because the vessels are all monitored. Each vessel that is fishing within the EEZ have beacons that are monitored by the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) in Honiara. So all vessel movements within its territory, be it Fiji or any other Pacific Island country is basically monitored and these reports are also given by the fishing vessels that are legally fishing to report any illegal activity within the area of responsibilities.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Samuela Vunivalu?

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; the most recent threat to the offshore fisheries in the region is “Blue Boats”. Can the Honourable Minister inform the House how he is addressing it?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the supplementary question.

Blue Boats, Madam Speaker, is basically aligned to Vietnamese fishing boats that do not have electronic monitoring system on board. They carry out a lot of illegal activities all around the South China Sea. Recently, they have moved to the Pacific area because of the strict surveillance carried out by the Chinese in the South China Sea.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There being no other question, we will move on to Written Questions. Honourable Prem Singh is absent this morning, therefore, I am allowing the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad to ask the written question on his behalf.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, we have decided to withdraw that question because the original question was something else and it was changed in the Business Committee.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The question has been withdrawn.

(Written Question, Question No. 129/2017, was withdrawn)

Although not in the Order Paper, the Secretariat has received a notification for the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations to table his written response. I now call on the Minister to have the floor.

Tabling of Written Responses to Questions

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 45(5), I hereby table my written response to Question No. 105/2017 by the Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo.

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

(Written Response handed to the Secretary-General)

Thank you, and that brings us to the end of question time.

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

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

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

1. There will be two Statements from the Attorney-General and the Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications;
2. Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts; and
3. Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism and Lands and Mineral Resources.

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 in response for five minutes. There will also be response from the Leader of National Federation Party and be given five minutes to also speak in response. There will be no debate.

I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General, Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications to deliver his Statement.

World Bank and IMF Meeting

Madam Speaker, firstly, I would like to talk about the recent World Bank and IMF Meetings that Fiji attended and the Spring Meeting that was held in Washington D.C. Madam Speaker, this is the second year that we have attended the Spring Meetings and this year, in particular, the focus was on climate change. This pre-meetings also gives us an opportunity to talk to independent organisations such as IMF that do credit assessment of individual countries too, we are given an opportunity to be able to state where we are headed, and indeed, Madam Speaker, the IMF was very positively pleased with the Fijian economy, in particular after *TC Winston*, where nearly a third of the growth of our GDP was wiped off. The fact of the matter is that, we are still tracking on in excess of 2 percent growth rate, notwithstanding *TC Winston*.

Madam Speaker, we also were able to discuss a number of issues pertaining to financing. As I had highlighted in Honourable Niumataiwalu's question earlier on, in respect to the climate finance, we were also able to highlight the points of distinction between climate finance regarding adaptation and also mitigation, which I would like to delve into later on.

The reality, Madam Speaker, is that, there is an increasing demand by public authorities, governments to be able to access finance and the reality is also dawning upon, even organisations such as the World Bank, IMF and ADB, that they simply cannot do it alone. We simply cannot also do it alone with only Green Climate Fund (GCF). As you have seen that the GCF accessing of climate finance is actually very bureaucratic, it is also very time consuming. We also need to have an accredited organisation and in fact, we have already put in the papers for the Fiji Development Bank (FDB) to become an accredited organisation, as far as GCF is concerned. We believe that with the accreditation of FDB under the GCF umbrella, will not only bring opportunities for Fijian businesses and, of course, the Government itself and State-Owned Enterprises, but be able to be the conduit to other Pacific Island Countries that do not necessarily have the same economies of scale that we do have.

Madam Speaker, the World Bank and IMF is also now saying, and I quote from the World Bank Group President, Mr. Kim's Speech, he said and I quote:

“We believe that all development finance institutions should be working to crowd in private capital through a set of principles that will maximise resources and benefits for the poor. We're not there yet, but this is how we think we should proceed in order to get there.”

As he stated, Madam Speaker, that climate finance cannot be separated from development finance and a partnership approach with development partners is critical, defraying the high cost of integrating resilience in small States.

Madam Speaker, we also must develop innovative financial models that make investment in climate adaptation a lot more attractive to the private sector. We may have heard about the 'green bonds' that have been issued in particular, in relation to mitigation. Green bonds, Madam Speaker, if you actually look behind the façade, the price points are not much different from the normal bonds. It has given a nice flavour, it is called 'green bonds' but the actual pricing mechanism is the same. So the cost of those bonds is, in fact, the same as any other normal bond but, of course, it makes the good flavour to say 'green bonds'.

So, the idea is; how do we move that ahead to make green bonds or give green bonds a premier position in respect of countries that not only want to access it for mitigation purposes but for us, and in particular for many developing parts of the world, for adaptation purposes?

Madam Speaker, this requires ingenuity, it requires innovation, and it requires what we call an upskilling of the Climate Action Agenda. As the Honourable Prime Minister will be leading our Presidency for COP23, this is one of the key themes of the Fijian Presidency. The theme is, to be able to look at adaptation finance, to be able to bring in more private sector participation, in particular private sector interest in financing adaptation, and also to be able to ensure that we bring in that level of ingenuity and creativity.

Last but not least, as highlighted earlier on, to be able to change a very skewed approach to the allocation of climate finance. At the moment, it is very much skewed towards mitigation. Yes, we do need funding for mitigation and, in fact, the Fijian Government is working on a number of mitigation measures and one of them in particular, is related to the transportation sector. We are developing that idea at the moment as to how we can meet under the NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions), as the Honourable Prime Minister gave the undertaking that Fiji will reduce its carbon footprint, notwithstanding the fact that we have got negligible carbon footprint compared to the rest of the world, but we will reduce our carbon footprint by 30 percent by 2030.

Madam Speaker, we have had discussions on the climate change mitigation/adaptation and, in fact, we highlighted that Fiji's Presidency will not only focus on adaptation finance which is our theme, but also give that commitment to the crucial task of expediting the progress in the rule book of the Paris Agreement. Of course, everyone as we know is quite sensitive to the current political discourse regarding climate change, in particular what is happening in other parts of the developed world, nonetheless, this does not only present challenges but also a lot of opportunities. And we are seeing that the gaps are being filled in respect of this void that currently may exist or perceived to exist by the private sector. We are seeing the private sector crowd into that area, we are seeing a lot of NGOs and a lot of CSOs that are a lot more interested in the Climate Action Agenda and that energy, the Fijian Presidency wants to harness. And that is exactly what the Honourable Prime Minister has said in a number of messages that he has given out. Of course, these all leads up to the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue which will be held at the COP24 in Poland.

Madam Speaker, we, of course, want to scale up the work on the global Climate Action Agenda and build up the Marrakesh Partnership for Climate Action, given the current uncertainty dynamics, as I had said, in the political discourse. We, of course, need to be able to agree that building resilience and building the climate proofing in our economies and infrastructure is very, very critical.

Madam Speaker, again, as I had highlighted the ratio of 80:20, we need to be able to change that ratio in the number of the forums that we attended in Washington. The general discussion was, we need to bring it to 50:50. That, of course, may not be achieved overnight but nonetheless, the Fijian Presidency will focus on changing the current 80:20 ratio.

The GCF which was highlighted earlier on, Madam Speaker, was set up in 2010 by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The essential aim is to provide climate finance, the low emission in climate resilient projects and programmes. It is also going to help Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDs), African States. Madam Speaker, as I had highlighted earlier on, Fiji was a recipient of the \$31 million.

We currently have another major project that we put in a submission for, and as you know that JICA has done a Nadi River Rehabilitation Programme. As you know that under one of the previous Governments post-1987, there were some work done for the diversion of the Nadi River, unfortunately that never took place at the time it was supposed to. Today, the development around Namaka and all those places have sprung up to such a high level that the diversion programme actually cannot be undertaken. It will cost billions of dollars to do that, to relocate people, et cetera.

However, JICA has come up with a very good solution to it which includes damming, pooling of water, the building of a couple of new bridges and it is a programme that may cost in excess of about \$300 million. JICA, through the Japanese Government, is willing to fund the entire project. However, we want to take a blended finance approach and we again, approach the GCF to be able to fund this project or, at least, partially again through the ADB. Of course, if FDB was accredited, we could have gone through them (FDB). So what will actually happen in the next few months, we will find out whether that project can be funded through the GCF.

We also, Madam Speaker, attended the Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition. Fiji was invited to speak at the Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition, given the fact that we have the Presidency. We, of course, again in a way a bit out of place because actually carbon pricing leadership coalition relates a lot of it to developed countries or countries with very high carbon footprint.

Madam Speaker, the reality of climate change is not just simply some, I am more of saying that it is up in the air and some trendy thing, it is actually a very real issue. It is an issue pertaining to health. For example, you have cities like Beijing that has very high levels of pollution because of

carbon emissions. It has actually become a health issue for them to be able to address the emission of carbon in the air because people are getting sick. The same thing with the city of Delhi. There are many other cities that are actually affected by it, so it is actually a practical issue, it is not something fancy that you need to agree to Paris Agreement. It is actually a very localised issue that needs to be addressed and I think that is what we need to take on board in respect of that and that, of course, applies to us too.

Madam Speaker, as we are told in the carbon pricing coalition, that the pricing they are doing in their respective countries does not actually affect us as much and, therefore, we need to be able to look at climate finance architecture and to re-evaluate their very own often impractical conditions that are imposed on small States to actually access climate finance. Many times projects in countries like Tonga and various other Southern Pacific Island Countries, in countries in the Indian Oceans, in the Caribbean and, of course, in the Pacific is rejected because the economies of scale do not exist because they say it is not a bankable project. So, when they do solar farms, you know you need 10,000 acres of putting panels to actually make it quite attractive and actually getting a return on your investment.

Madam Speaker, the NDC partnership which we also participated in, we laid out our priorities for COP23, the NDC partnership, Madam Speaker, is a new coalition of governments and international institutions, working together to ensure that countries receive the tools and support, they need to achieve ambitious climate and sustainable development targets as fast and effectively as possible.

The NDC partnership, Madam Speaker, by way of information was launched during COP22 last year and the Co-Chairs are Morocco and Germany. Interestingly enough, Madam Speaker, Germany is also the Chair of the G20. Fiji intends to join the NDC partnership. In fact, we have already put in an application which will tie in with Fiji's Presidency of COP23 with Morocco as the previous President of COP and Germany, the hosting country of this year's COP.

Madam Speaker, we can also, through NDC partnership, better understand and unpack our own NDC commitments. The NDC partnership can also help us map out our roadmap for GHG reduction and assist Fiji to leverage international public finance, together with private sector finance the scale of climate action.

Madam Speaker, the NDC has, of course, spell out the action countries need to take to address climate change, both in terms of adaption and mitigation.

Madam Speaker, as I had highlighted, we want to reduce our carbon footprint by 30 per cent by 2030, the target is for the renewable energy share and electricity generation to approach 100 percent by 2030 from around 16 percent currently or in 2030. In addition, Fiji's NDC targets a reduction of 10 percent carbon dioxide emissions from energy efficiency improvements across the country.

Madam Speaker, we have also worked with a number of organisations and we also had very useful discussions with the World Resource Institute, which is actually an intellectual think-tank regarding the various matters pertaining to climate change and their wonderful resources, with their wonderful resource persons also.

We have asked them, Madam Speaker, to come to Fiji and they will be soon sending a delegation to Fiji. For example, as we are talking about our five to twenty years development plan, we want our development plans to be climate sensitised. It is very, very important for us to be able to put in place development plans that are climate sensitive, in respect of development projects, in

respect of the impact on population movements, the impact on population health and the way that we are going to forge ahead in respect of putting in place a number of development projects.

Madam Speaker, we also participated in the initiative called the Climate Action Peer Exchange which is also known as CAPE, to exhilarate NDC implementation at the local level. The CAPE is a World Bank and Moroccan COP22 Presidency initiative that was launched in November 2016 as a peer exchange platform targeting Ministries of Finance and Planning.

Madam Speaker, it was very interesting, Fiji was lauded for actually having the climate change within the Ministry of Economy because the reality is, many of the Government Ministers, for example, Environment Ministers lamented the fact that whilst they may be actually going full steam ahead, it is not mainstreamed. So they sit in the single ministry is not mainstreamed to the planning office, it is not actually mainstreamed by giving the right level of financial resources through the country's annual budgetary allocation. So, Fiji is very much lauded for the fact that we are promoting and mainstreaming climate change by putting it in the Ministry of Economy and Department of National Planning.

Madam Speaker, we also discuss with them, we have as you know a number of adaptation issues pertaining to flooding in Fiji and we need to take a measure of concerted effort as to how we can reduce flooding. There are many parts of Fiji that actually gets flooded because purely of silting and many of the places the water ways that are actually getting flooded are not necessary the bigger rivers. We are not seeing Rewa River rise for a while and of course the dredging does help, but the fact of the matter is many other smaller streams, creeks that cross highways actually get flooded really quickly and if you look at the depth of these waterways, they are significantly reduced, so we need to take a national approach and that is some of the areas that we have also were talking about.

Madam Speaker, the other issue is about vulnerability and fragility, this is very important, Madam Speaker. We all talk about vulnerable and fragile States, but the issues about definition, how can the country be defined to be vulnerable and fragile? Just because you get a cyclone does not necessarily make you fragile or vulnerable.

Under the World Bank's policy, Madam Speaker, there are 2 types of countries; you have the IDA countries and the IBRD countries. We are actually IBRD countries, in other words we are billion come country, we deemed to be a billion country, therefore, we do not have the concessional funding that IDA countries get. IDA countries are countries that have low income or do not have the ability to actually furnish their debt so, countries like Pakistan for example, get IDA funds but for example we cannot get that because we deemed to be a billion come country.

Our argument, Madam Speaker, which is what we have been pushing for the past 18 months is that we need to be able to look at the index of measuring vulnerability and fragility. There may be instances, for example, a country like Fiji we use us as an example, notwithstanding the fact that we may not be vulnerable and fragile, but you could actually have a climatic event that could make us vulnerable say, if for example, *TC Winston* had come and hit Suva, wiped out the industrial areas, we have 300,000 people living in the Suva-Nausori-Lami corridor if they had been affected and it went through the middle of Viti Levu, wiped out the Mamanucas, wiped out Denarau and all those hotels, we would have been in a very dire situation economically. It would have affected one of the major foreign revenue generator, which is tourism. We would not have been able to bounce back as quickly as we did, so those trigger points Madam Speaker, we are saying the argument is, those trigger points must actually put us into the box of vulnerability. We do not necessarily want to eat into the concessional funding available to the IDA countries we accept that, we are billion come country, but because of the nature of this climatic events and because of the size of our country you could have actually a climatic event that could set us back 34 to 50 years.

So, apart from not being able to meet our infrastructure cost, forget SDGs, SDGs would become a long way away if we have major devastation, so this particular issue we have been pushing Madam Speaker, it seems to be getting some traction in through the discourse that has been developed and we of course at the same time were asked to speak at the small states gathering that was held by the World Bank. Currently, the small states secretariat the Chair is Granada, the Prime Minister of Granada was there with a couple of other Caribbean Ministers of Finance or Economists that were there and Madam Speaker, we have some very useful discussions regarding that.

Madam Speaker, of course one of the things that we do need to do as we said, to be able to get the G20 to understand the vulnerability of the V20. The V20 group Madam Speaker is initially comprised as the name suggests - 20 groups of vulnerable states they came together, Fiji is now part of that of course the number now exceeds more than 20, as you know we had other countries.

So, Madam Speaker, we had some very useful discussions with the G20 group and we make some submissions regarding that. The G20 Madam Speaker, is in fact increased the number of loans that can be made available to IDA countries, they have increased of almost 2 fold, Fiji cannot access that, middle-income country cannot access that and what we again argued there and made the case that we should be able to access concessional funding if we have certain trigger points that put us into the category. We also Madam Speaker, looking at the developing new clauses within our loan agreements now. So in the loan agreements there what we want, Madam Speaker, and we are working with our development partners that repayments should stop, should we have certain climatic events that will affect the country and in fact, couple of the Caribbean's countries have already done that and very successfully their lending partners have agreed to that.

Madam Speaker, we also had discussions and bilateral meeting with the Germany, France, Australia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the US State Department and also the US Deputy Special Envoy on Climate Change.

Many of these bilateral meetings were focussed on Fiji's vision for COP23 where the Honourable Prime Minister will be taken to the rest of the world and in that respect, I am happy to announce also that for example, beginning from tomorrow the UNESCAP meeting on climate finance and we have already sent the message from the Honourable Prime Minister that will be given in Bangkok tomorrow where this particular meeting will be held. We have also invited Morocco to attend as the current presidency to come and visit the incoming presidency.

Madam Speaker, one of the other issues that was finally discussed also was on social safety nets; for example, after climatic events. As you know, Madam Speaker, again the initiative that the Government took after the events of *TC Winston* was, you may recall Madam Speaker, we actually paid those people social welfare recipients, three months' lump sum payments. Now, what we saw, Madam Speaker and the feedback has been by actually providing these three months advance lump sum payments to those people who received social welfare, we were able to get them to very quickly recover from such an event because the studies have shown in other parts of the world, people who are at the lower end of the socio-economic scale and rely on social warfare payments, if they are given the normal welfare payments, they actually begin to eat into areas. It is like, "Do I send my children to school or not? Do I have two meals or not? So these are the kind of things that actually takes place and many studies have shown and in fact we were lauded that Fiji has done quite well in that respect.

So, of course, Madam Speaker, we need to continuously build upon the social safety networks in particular after the cyclonic events. Of course the annexes of \$200 million payment out by the FNPF also did help, by bringing a lot of cash within the system and giving people to be able to spend money within the economy.

Madam Speaker, before I just round off this highlight that again that we look forward to these new discussions that are taking place, the new discourse that is taking place. Climate Finance, E Coast Development Finance. We are very excited, the world is very excited about the Fijian Presidency and the Honourable Prime Minister of course will be visiting Germany next month. And a lot of these measures actually be ticking off in the next few months. As a country of course, we need to be able to take advantage of the fact that Fiji has been given the Presidency.

I think many people do not necessarily understand the difference between the Presidency and also Fiji's position. They are two separate issues. The Presidency's role is to ensure the furtherance of Paris Agreement. The Presidency's role is to further the climate action agenda. The Presidency's role is to bring the thematic areas that the Presidency wants to push, the ones the Presidency wants to highlight and create new initiatives. It is a global issue. So the Honourable Prime Minister will be bringing all the parties together; wherever there is any issues that may need resolutions, that may need consensus building, that is what he will be doing.

On the other hand, the Fijian position Madam Speaker, is the country position in Fiji. The Fijian country position would be led by a separate delegation. We have the Honourable Prime Minister, who will be as the President will be supported by the Honourable Minister for Agriculture who is the climate champion. And then of course we have our Ambassador in Geneva who will be the Chief Negotiator for the Presidency. Then we have the Climate Ambassador who is the Ambassador in Brussels, who will be Ambassador for the Presidency for COP23.

So, Madam Speaker, the Presidency is a very enormous role, it involves an international approach to the climate change and COP23 and how we can further PARIS agreement. There are certain definitive targets we need to meet overall as a globe and there are of course what we saw that a number of countries, notwithstanding the fact that the means of political changes. It has become in fact a commercial and financial imperative to go down the track and we need to be able to bring the private sector and we are currently working on a number of those issues pertaining to that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now invite the Leader of the Opposition or her designate to deliver his response.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Maybe a suggestion to the Honourable Minister that they have a Olympic gold medallist on their side so that they can also utilise it to be part of the climate change campaign.

Madam Speaker, climate change and its effects has been felt in Fiji and neighbouring Pacific Islands Communities. In early 1960s and recent years we have had moments, an internal migration amongst our islands due to effects of climate change brought about by manmade disasters.

Let me us just point quickly that this side of the House fully supports the need to hike an awareness and seek as much help as we obtain for the combating of the issue of climate change globally, more so on the most affected region, following *TC Winston* last year no one else in Fiji will still harbour any doubts about the effects of climate change in the region and here at home.

Sea-level rise has become real an issue in real cases now occurring now in many villages around Fiji. The experience in Vunidogoloa, likewise many other villages around the country are facing various types of problems associated with climate change from landslides, soil erosions, the seeping of sea salt or salt water into drinking boreholes, flooding of village grains requiring new locations to higher grounds and others.

While we are aware of the important role Fiji plays as chair to COP23 as I stated yesterday, there are many issues occurring here at home that needs proper scrutiny by Government, especially related to developments that are contributing to the damage of our environment. This side of the House will continue to point out that we must be cautious that we do not compromise the lives of our people and the long term sustainability of our economy by overlooking crucial environmental impacts of developments that can occur from such developments like sand mining, soil extraction or land reclamation, bauxite mining, water pollution from major manufacturing businesses and others that seem to be prevalent around the country today, some implemented by the way under devious circumstances. We will not stop in reiterating that we have to be cautious that our legacy will be what our people will face in the future because of the decisions we take today.

Madam Speaker, very briefly the Pacific region is at the worst end of climate change effects as we all know. The availability of funding to assist in relocation and other climate change adaptation plans is limited and whatever funds are secured needs to be utilised with the greatest of care. Financial prudence cannot be compromised, one of the crucial issues our side of the House is keen to know from the Honourable Minister is how much funds exactly is being targeted to be raised for his activities related to COP23. This is clarity, Madam Speaker, especially if taxpayers money will be also be channelled to his cause.

Madam Speaker, this side of the House in the last sitting passed a Bill, meanwhile which will allow for a special trust fund to be set aside for COP23. Parliament through the Government numbers has now passed for that trust account to be audited by external independent auditors - take note of that the attempt to be transparent and prudent in spending of this funds targeted towards COP23 and however, not holding my breath when it comes to private auditing. This House is all too familiar with issues pertaining to private accounting firms.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I note that Honourable Attorney-General in his comments to the media is talking about collaboration and bipartisan approach to combatting climate change. We are all for collaboration and I know my colleagues on this side of the House would be overjoyed if the Government side of the House were to actually walk the talk and reach across the isles rather just being hypocrites. I hope that Government will increase extension e and action towards the combatting of the effects of climate change both here in Fiji and likewise in the region. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now invite the Leader of NFP or his designate to speak in response.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Attorney-General for his very comprehensive and detailed statement on his visit to Washington and all the meetings he obviously had there. Just from what was presented to us, Madam Speaker, indicates the enormity of the task before us and the complexity of climate financing and complexity of accessing climate financing for our countries.

On that, Madam Speaker, I want to also point out that the Honourable Attorney-General is right. The whole issue of climate change is a multi-disciplinary issue, it requires a multi-faceted approach, it cuts across different ministries in any country and I want to at the outset say, Madam Speaker that there seems to be some disjointed approach in the sense that, you know, the Minister for Economy is also responsible for climate change.

The Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Foreign Affairs is looking at COP23. Then you have the Minister for Environment, then you have the Minister for Fisheries. What I would suggest Government to do to set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee and more importantly, Madam Speaker,

as my colleague has already said, we perhaps need a bipartisan approach on this, perhaps a Parliamentary Committee to especially look at some of these issues because it is an ongoing issue, it may not be just in this term of Parliament it could be a medium to long-term that we are looking at.

I am also aware, Madam Speaker, from the media reports that the World Bank and IMF Spring Meetings kind of painted a bleak outlook of global finances due to the various inflection points in geopolitics, and I think that is the landscape that we need to understand and we have, sort of, launched our COP23 Presidency in that environment. Disheartening as it may seem, Madam Speaker, it is going to be our test of leadership and our resolute hope on the global stage, so it is very, very important.

I also looked at the Vulnerable Twenty Group (V20) Ministerial Communique and from that, Madam Speaker, I can see that they are keen on identifying what I call, 'Fiscal Risk Management Agenda' and it is continuing to call for ambition on climate financing. That really is not new. I mean, we were a member of AOSIS and we used to do the same. But at some point, I think we have to recognise that these same ideas and maybe the same tune is not probably going to get us and Pacific Island Countries and other smaller countries where we need to go.

I also deduce probably three main issues from this Spring Meetings. One, Madam Speaker, is the bleakness of tabling a real global financing for climate change in the narrative. We hear terms, such as, "all about risk", "addressing fragility" and I think the Honourable Attorney General quite rightly pointed out the inflection point, a point where we can put ourselves as a fragile state as in a situation where we can source that funding.

He also quiet right pointed out and this is not a new thing, I mean, the financiers or global players are always interested in mitigation rather adaptation. So, Madam Speaker, I think the idea that we need to look at our own adaptation measures because for Fiji, while mitigation in some areas is important, adaptation for our people is going to be very, very important. And that is where I think we need to drive our agenda and I also understand what the Honourable Attorney-General was saying, that the COP23 Presidency is separate from the Fiji position.

He is right and we agree with that. I think Fiji's position needs to be carefully thought out, carefully articulated and I do not think we can contract this out to some foreign consultants, such as Baker & McKenzie or Qorvis. I think we need to develop that local capacity and that is where, Madam Speaker, I go back to look at how the inter-ministerial committee can look at that and perhaps, a Parliamentary Committee which will be continued in the next Parliament as well because this issue is a long term issue and it needs the effort and collaboration of everyone, especially us as legislators in this Parliament. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will adjourn and break for refreshment. We will resume at 11.45 a.m.

Members of the visitors in the gallery are invited to also partake in the refreshments served.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.15 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.47 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, just before we begin, there is another group of Politics and Governance PL students from USP, who are here today. We welcome you and thank you for taking interest in your Parliament.

I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General, Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communication to deliver his statement.

#### Commemorative Circulation of Bank Notes and Coins

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Madam Speaker, on 20th April this year, the Honourable Prime Minister officiated an event that marked the amortisation of an achievement that epitomises our aspirations as a nation.

Last year when our Fijian Men's Rugby Sevens Team won the gold at the Rio Olympics, Madam Speaker, it demonstrated to the world, the dedication, commitment and resilience of the Fijian people, that despite being a country of less than a million people that we were able to win an Olympic gold medal, a fete that many other larger countries was not able to even achieve. And I am told, Madam Speaker, that anyone who did the assessment on the amount of money spent on training that we apparently became number one in the world. Madam Speaker, as the Honourable Prime Minister said, we may be small but we are strong when we work together, we are unbeatable.

Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the Reserve Bank of Fiji (RRBF) and the Board and Management for this great initiative to issue a commemorative circulation \$7 Bank Note and a fifty cent coin. We have received extremely positive feedback on the designs and portraits used and the fact that our Rio Olympians have been honoured on our own currency.

First, Madam Speaker, is of course the note, which I should go into a bit of detail later and this, of course, is the point. Madam Speaker, I would like to also take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for actually attending the launch that brought pride to all Fijians.

Madam Speaker, we wish to remind Honourable Members that the 2016 Rio 7s Olympic took place a few short months after *TC Winston*, the strongest storm to hit our shores, the second strongest storm ever recorded in the world and the strongest storm in the Southern Hemisphere that wreak havoc our country.

Following the Cyclone, we were down and most certainly we went out. However, at the Olympics we grabbed the opportunity to assert ourselves on a global stage, much like we are currently doing for the important challenge of climate change. With our Olympic Gold Medal, Madam Speaker, we united our people and brought home the much needed encouragement and motivation to forge ahead with our country's recovery.

Madam Speaker, a nation's currency typically illustrates what its people hold near and dear. Frequently as is the case in Fiji and other countries, the colour and images chosen tell a story about a nation's character, uniqueness and the development journey of a country. Images of multiculturalism, historic occasions, endemic indigenous flora and fauna, artefacts and important industries have adorned our currency banknotes and coins, in particular over the past few years. Our notes and coins have a history of being vibrant and attractive, and a subject of international acclaim many times. All finalised banknotes and coins are recorded in the history of the nation. The same designs are noted by currency experts, collectors and enthusiasts all over the world.

Immediately after the Olympic, Madam Speaker, the RBF Board approved the Management's recommendation to recognise the Rio Goal achievement on our nation's currency. We, of course, were very happy to comply and facilitate this particular initiative and, of course, we kept it under wraps for a very long period of time.

Madam Speaker, the plan initially was to have a commemorative painted or coloured coin. Unfortunately, due to technical limitations, the coin was produced normal or unpainted.

Madam Speaker, this is not the first time the RBF has issued a commemorative coin to honour our Olympians. The RBF celebrated Honourable Iliesa Delana's gold medal win in the F42 High Jump event in the London Paralympics in 2012 with 50 cent circulation coin.

Madam Speaker, again in this initiative, the 50 cent denomination was chosen because it would readily be accessible to all our citizens, especially our young children. The commemorative coins were minted by current suppliers, Royal Canadian Mint. This was because the RBF retained the overall shape and measurements of the current 50 cent coin, and substituted the new Rio design in place of the existing flora and fauna design. In addition, the metallic content of the Rio commemorative 50 cent coin is the same as the flora and fauna 50 cent coin.

In doing this, Madam Speaker, RBF retained its existing 1 million coins supply order with the Canadian Mint, to meet currency demand but suit the design of the Rio Gold format.

Madam Speaker, this ultimately meant that no additional cost was incurred in minting the new Rio Gold coin design 50 cent coin. Madam Speaker, there was no cost involved in doing this additional design. As we all know that printing these things and printing these coins actually cost money.

Madam Speaker, while the commemorative 50 cent coin was in process, the RBF Board Directors also approved the commemorative bank note project and a selective tender was initiated by inviting tenders from our current bank note printer and printer for the last 103 years, De La Rue Currency and renowned French bank note printer Oberthur Fiduciaire.

After thorough consideration of a number of factors, including the design, Madam Speaker, technical and security features, price and ability to deliver the final product within the timeframe required, the RBF approved the tender by Oberthur Fiduciaire in October, 2016 as opposed to De La Rue Currency. Madam Speaker, it is important to note that the unit cost of producing one \$7 banknote is, in fact, lower than the cost of printing an existing \$5 note which is approximately 30 cents per note.

Madam Speaker, the cost of printing two million commemorative banknotes were borne by the RBF, not by Government. Let me highlight here that the Government and the taxpayers did not bear this cost at all. The RBF is confident that the cost will be fully recovered from the sale of special untouched sheets of \$7 banknotes. So you can go and buy commemorative sheets of uncut of these notes, 32 of these notes will come in one sheet and they actually seek a very high price.

Uncut banknotes, Madam Speaker, a popular collectors attempt, the highest numismatic revenue earner for the RBF in recent years. The RBF has printed 10,000 of these uncut sheets which I have highlighted as 32 notes per sheet, and estimates from this numismatic item to generate about \$3 million to \$4 million just in sales, which many collectors are after this.

Madam Speaker, as we know that the special features of a \$7 note include the use of optically variable ink in gold colour, representing the gold win which contains embossed pictures in the shape

of RBF's logo, the *Tagaga*. This effect can be felt by gradually moving one finger over it. This embossing gives depth and length and is perfectly to the depiction of a gold medal.

When placed under ultraviolet light source as a security feature, the gold medals round the necks of each player depicted to the note are revealed. So you can actually see the gold medals if you put up against the light. As well as the set of goal posts with the try being converted. You will see. Go home and have a look at it through the light and you will see these features.

The serial numbers are also laid out in a unique manner, Madam Speaker, one set in horizontal and the other set in vertical format, as we have seen from this note. All serial numbers have the prefix as AU, the chemical symbol for gold, and there is also a two millimetre security thread with words dedicated to our Gold Olympians.

Madam Speaker, the commemorative \$7 note and 50 cent coin both feature the mastermind behind our Rio Gold win, the National Sevens former coach, Mr. Ben Ryan, in his iconic pose in the world renown Sigatoka Sand Dunes, are very fitting place, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, let me also add that we have reliably informed that this is now the only \$7 banknote in circulation in the world. The only country in planet Earth that has a \$7 banknote. Also for the first time, Madam Speaker, Fiji has a banknote with an observe front, vertically orientated, and the reverse bank remains in the traditional horizontal orientation. This orientation complements their selective designs.

Madam Speaker, the image chosen for the reverse side of the banknote was the best high resolution photograph that captured the entire team and the officials behind the team, and this, of course, includes:

- Mr. Ben Ryan; Head Coach;
- Mr. Ropate Kauvesi, Section Manager;
- Mr. Nacanieli Cawanibuka, Strength & Conditioning Coach;
- Mr. William Koong, Physiotherapist;
- Mr. Nacanieli Cawanibuka, Trainer; and
- Mr. Chris Cracknell, Assistant Coach.

It is also extremely fitting, Madam Speaker, that the Honourable Prime Minister who is also the Fiji President Rugby Union, features in the image. The Bainimarama-led Government is instrumental in reorganising and refocusing the Fiji Rugby Union, which eventually led to the recruitment of Ben Ryan, who set us on the road to RIO Gold and, of course, we funded part of his salary.

Likewise, Madam Speaker, the other image on the 50 cent coin features the Sevens Team's famous bonding pose. Typically, the designing, production in delivery of banknotes or coins ranges between 12 months to 18 months. The RBF, with its partners, bank-noted printer and Coin Mint Printer took only eight months to produce the commemorative currency. These are remarkable achievements and we would like to thank them for their efforts in this.

Madam Speaker, the \$7 banknote and 50 cent coin had been gazetted as legal tender and are part of currency circulation with effect from 21st April, 2017. The RBF entered almost 600,000 of the \$7 notes and around 700,000 of these 50 cent coins into circulation. This means that the commemorative banknote and coin is redeemable at face value, and can be used to purchase goods and services or for payment or for account. This was a conscious decision to ensure that both, the banknote and coin were as affordable and accessible as possible. If the RBF were to issue very limited

uncirculated banknotes or coins, it would have attracted a premium which would limit accessibility to the general public. We do, however, expect that these banknotes and coins will be kept by Fijians, and the currency enthusiasts for its novelty and sentimental value, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it is important that any country keeps its currency banknotes and coins relevant. There are many technical aspects to this relevancy but broadly these encompass structure, security, durability and design. The RBF keeps a constant tab on the relevance of our nation's currency and at least every seven years of comprehensive review, the world technical aspects is typically commission.

Madam Speaker, the review exercise includes a public survey and an invitation to tender process that is made to all leading banknote producers and Coin Minters globally. The public survey feedback and tenders are analysed and decision made based on expected benefits weighed against cost.

These decisions, Madam Speaker, include security features that need to be updated to keep abreast of technology available to counterfeiters. Changes the banknotes sub-straight can enhance durability or longevity of the banknotes when in circulation.

Metallic composition of coins, Madam Speaker, can also be changed to improve convenience and deter counterfeiting and also becomes lighter. Altering denominations will also make economic sense from a convenience and cost perspective.

Madam Speaker, during the review, the opportunity is also taken afresh and revitalise all images on our currency. Prior to this, the last change in currency was done in 2012 for the flora and fauna banknotes and coins, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, let me briefly mention the currency designs launched in 2012 by the former President, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, replaced the long serving currency designs with the Queen of England's image. Madam Speaker, you will note in 2012, currency changed, the \$100, \$50, \$20, \$10 and \$5 banknotes depicted flora and fauna indigenous to Fijians.

The \$100 bank note features Fiji's *Nanaya* which is of striking appearance and extremely well known to the inland communities of Viti Levu, mainly Navosa and other places similar to that. The \$50 banknote has the *tagimocia*, Fiji's best known flower. The \$20 features the *Kacau ni Gau*, known to nest only in Gau island, is one of the world's most rare birds. The \$10 and \$5 banknotes feature the *Belevi* which is endemic to Fiji, and is one of Fiji's few true freshwater residents. The *kulawai* which is the lorikeet, the smallest member of the parrot family is also endemic to Fiji and has only been recorded from Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Taveuni and Ovalau.

Likewise, Madam Speaker, the coin designs, the \$2, \$1, 50c and 20c coins introduced in 2012 also features indigenous flora and fauna. Madam Speaker, these notes and coins have since been accepted by one in all. Of course, people in some quarters felt that our currency would lose its value if we remove the Queen's portrait. The point to note, Madam Speaker, is that the ingenuity should not only be emphasised through politics as the Opposition seems to think and favour, but my mainstreaming it and by celebrating it in our everyday activities and way of life, thus precisely what we set out to do, Madam Speaker, when Cabinet approved having indigenous flora and fauna on our notes and coins.

Madam Speaker, the reality also is that the value of the Fijian currency is not determined by the picture on the notes and coins but rather the two-way trades between Fiji and its major trading partners. We wish to also highlight that RBF was awarded the Reserve Bank Note of the Year Award

for the Fiji's flora and fauna banknote series at the Asian, Middle East and Africa Higher Security Printing Conference that took place in Thailand in October 2013.

Madam Speaker, I would like to finally acknowledge the teams at the Oberthur Fiduciaire, the Royal Canadian Mint and the RBF that worked directly on this initiative and, of course, our Sevens Rugby Team. I think it is important to mention their names again, Madam Speaker, for the purpose of *Hansard*:

1. Captain Osea Kolinisau;
2. Apisai Domolailai;
3. Jasa Veremalua;
4. Josua Tuisova
5. Kitione Taliga;
6. Leone Nakarawa;
7. Samisoni Viriviri;
8. Savenaca Rawaca;
9. Semi Kunatani;
10. Jerry Tuwai;
11. Vatemo Ravouvou;
12. Viliame Mata; and
13. Masivesi Dakuwaqa.

Madam Speaker, through these notes and coins, the nation salutes these people and coach and other coach members, and we are proud to celebrate your golden achievement on our national currency.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Leader of the Opposition or her designate to deliver a response.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond from this side of our Party to the statement by the Honourable Minister. We also congratulate our boys and their victory in Rio at the Olympics. It is good that we remember them in this manner but our concern, Madam Speaker, is that, we appear to be glorifying the leadership more than the sport of rugby and the players.

In the beginning when they came, we SODELPA, said they must each have a piece of land and they must each have a house. These boys come from the villages and it would be a real commemoration to remember down the years that this house was built for me by the Government of Fiji for my sacrifice for the victory in Rio. That is where we believe should be the focus of how we commemorate our victory in Rio.

Madam Speaker, I have a few questions to ask; how does this benefit the coffers of Fiji Rugby. Fiji Rugby has a money problem that is perennial. We do not see anything here that could contribute to the coffers of rugby and develop it. We have to be very careful, Madam Speaker, the one in Rio was the first time that Fiji Rugby Sevens came into the Olympics. Bigger economies are now taking interest to rugby. You saw in Hong Kong. I was very frightened when I saw Germany now competing in Sevens.

When these guys take on rugby on the level that they have taken soccer, Fiji will be left on the wayside. We are very vulnerable in that we do not have the money to compete with these people down the years.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Of course, they talk about the lottery, I talk about the lottery, we asked for exemption from Government for the lottery, zero. Our people who were selling lottery in Vanua Levu, the Army and Police stopped them from selling. And these are the people who are questioning us when we try to raise money for rugby.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Who was the promoter?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I was the promoter, Madam Speaker, because I was Chairman of Fiji Rugby, because I had a clean record with FRCA, that was how I was the promoter, but if I had the support of the people who only give all these empty promises to rugby, it would have been a success.

I commend the President of Fiji for buying a ticket, I do not think anyone from that side bought a ticket.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- I bought a ticket!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Maybe only Honourable Sudhakar who bought a ticket, so if they had helped bought a ticket and put their money behind their love of rugby, we could have got a successful lottery.

What we have now, Madam Speaker, is my fear that we will not be able to win this again down the years because we do not have the money to develop our people. I put up a petition for Fiji to consider franchising its rugby, unfortunately I am told that FRU is out of bounds, Parliament cannot entertain a franchise like that. I think we will challenge this because it is a sport that is dear to all of us, and I do not think Parliament should be told not to initiate any dialogue to help rugby.

Madam Speaker, like I said, I was the Chairman of Fiji Rugby for a number of years there and when I see our boys standing up against the English, the New Zealanders and Australians, I asked them; how did we get here? Madam Speaker, it is because of the support from our people.

In Nadroga, we are famous for rugby because when the team is in camp, everyone contributes to their training. I contribute whatever I can, someone goes and catch fish, vegetables, et cetera, to feed the boys. When they stand in front of the world playing that rugby in Hong Kong or wherever, it is because of the sacrifice of the ordinary people. That is why I wanted this petition so that we can look at franchising it and put money into the coffers of rugby to guarantee the success of the sport down the years.

I believe it is something that is wrong that we are not allowed to look into this. It is a concept. The value of rugby can never be realised because it is confined to the companies in Fiji, marketing their products to a small consumer base. It should be taken global, and that is where franchising would be a way to go about it and I hope that in the future, we can be allowed to have dialogue on this or initiate dialogue to put more money into rugby.

Madam Speaker, yes, let us remember the victory in Rio in this way, but it should be remembered in a manner that can contribute and put monetary value into rugby to benefit the sport. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. May I also applaud, once again, the valiant efforts of our Sevens heroes, and we salute them.

Madam Speaker, if you recall, this side of the House had, during one of our previous debates, strongly proposed that the Government side should upscale its financial support to our Sevens Team in the Olympic bid and I hope that is remembered. In fact, the Opposition had fought long and hard for more allocations but the Olympic success can only be attributed to them for their zealous effort. And from the then Coach Ben Ryan to all the team, the physiotherapist and Conditioning Coaches and the loyal fans, like the Blue Wiggers but most especially this is all about our boys, Madam Speaker. They did this and we can never thank them enough. I agree that these notes and coins are commemorative and it was the right thing to do but our support for our Sevens Team cannot and must not end here.

From this side of the House, we expect to see a little more support to our Sevens heroes during the coming Budget debate and a little more innovation from the Fiji Rugby Union in capitalising our national player.

It cannot be just limited to the boys' rugby environment alone. We must also acknowledge, as Honourable Gavoka said, the tremendous sacrifices of their families in that arduous journey and the journey to come as we defend our Olympic title. For that, we also expect that our Budget allocations will look for somewhere to acknowledge the family members and our Sevens heroes.

Madam Speaker, the Olympic standard cannot be a one-off. The global acknowledgement that Honourable Gavoka alluded to some of those, that global acknowledgement and excellence proven to us by our boys, must be maintained here forever. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts and deliver his statement.

#### Education for Sustainable Development – Literacy and Numeracy

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament; after the culmination or conclusion of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations convened to usher the bold and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as it is known, are the blueprint for successful prosperity in this current era. However, as per the UN acknowledgment, the key to the attainment of the 17 SDGs rests squarely and fairly upon the fulfilment of education.

Education, which is part of SDG 4, cuts across all the other Goals. Education has exclusive influence to impact each and every Goal; very few, if any involvement can be sustainable without education. This education rests on the attainment of basic literacy and numeracy, combined with educational opportunities for holistic development and lifelong learning outcomes for every boy and girl, and for other citizens of our nation.

Education is the greatest equaliser in this era. There is no substitute to quality education once it is made accessible to each and every person irrespective of their status, ethnicity, colour, age, creed, financial background, ability or disability, gender, geographical location or other factors. The global call for Education for Sustainable Development needs to be manifested in all aspects of education; a top to bottom approach, and then only will the 2030 targets become reachable.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to inform the House that Fiji, which is a signatory to the 2030 Agenda, is well on course to achieve the SDGs. There is no doubt that the first years of learning for the child is at their home with their parents, brothers, sisters and family members. The understanding of language, moral values, family values and virtues builds up the foundation for future learning. This learning is then further strengthened in Early Childhood Education (ECE) where the child is introduced to more literacy and numeracy contents. Then it is from Years 1 to 4 in Primary School, where the real foundation on the basics of literacy and numeracy is laid. I, therefore, in my address will focus on this development from ECE to lower primary and onwards.

Madam Speaker, I now wish to let the House know on how (ECE) utilises education to achieve sustainability, encompassing the Sustainable Development Goals. I will also dwell on the literacy and numeracy initiatives at the forefront of this process.

Madam Speaker, as we all are aware, literacy and numeracy development ideally starts before a child begins school. Every child undergoes development milestones during the first few years of life in the aspects of physical, cognitive, social and emotional language, literacy and numeracy. This is the appropriate period in which we introduce basic concepts related to education for sustainable development. Our Ministry has enveloped itself in the international movement and is looking closely at the four areas of Basic ECE development which are:

1. creative research-based curriculum;
2. appropriate resources and assessment methodologies;
3. early childhood education teachers; and
4. family involvement.

Madam Speaker, our curriculum has been revisited to take a child-friendly approach. Earlier this year, a new set of pictorials have been designed and developed by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), which have been provided to all the schools by the Education Resource Centre (ERC) of our Ministry. These resources focussed on enhancing literacy and numeracy, keeping in mind concepts which clearly state the programmes that must be designed within the context of the family and the community. Thus, pictorials were developed using English, Hindi, Urdu and *Vosa Vakaviti*; the commonly spoken languages that are inherent in our children's linguistic backgrounds, as well as are localised. The alphabet charts designed, showed children local animals, plants, fruits, vegetables, to name a few. Madam Speaker, this was done to ensure that learning did not happen in isolation but took into account cultural and local context sustainability. So whenever our teachers refer to a particular object to teach the name, we will use local objects to teach the name and alphabets.

The next area that the Ministry looked at was the qualifications of pre-school teachers. It was evident from the increased registration of ECE Centres that ECE teacher shortage may prevail in the future. As such, we now have included them into the Ministry's payroll.

In the last Budget, Madam Speaker, we have increased the pay of the ECE teachers, thus minimising the teacher shortage gap. All along, teachers of ECE Centres were running from pillar to post, harassed and pushed around by managers, not giving them full pay, Madam Speaker. Our Government recognised the important role that these teachers play in laying down the foundation for our children and, therefore, we decided to take on the payment of these teachers' salaries.

Madam Speaker, a budgetary allocation of \$3.3 million was made for the salary grant. It is processed and disbursed on a monthly basis to 1,112 teachers from 824 kindergarten centres with effect from 1st August, 2016. The categories of salary payments were based on the qualification of ECE teachers.

At the same time, we now see more and more current ECE teachers taking up further education which, no doubt, will lift their knowledge base and output, Madam Speaker. It has given hope to a lot of teachers, who could not go to university and gave up hope to ever get a tertiary qualification, now to come forward and go to FNU, USP or the University of Fiji to attain qualification in ECE education. Imagine the gender effect it will have, Madam Speaker, in terms of giving them hope and livelihood.

Madam Speaker, the fourth area which is family involvement is closely related to our Parental Engagement Framework which is Pillar 4, which we have robustly pursued since its launch at the start of last year. We strongly believe that parents play a very important role in the overall growth and development of our children. They need to take the ownership of growth and development for our children. They are the first educators for our children. Our children find comfort in them, Madam Speaker, and they are willing to share with them. They cannot leave the entire education growth and development process on our school centres. We are ready to support them but we need parental engagement and involvement, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the philosophy of education in Fiji is focussed on child-centred learning. Taking into consideration the demand of children, the Ministry of Education has recognised the strengths of early childhood pedagogies, exploited them fully and has adopted for our children a play-based thematic pedagogical approach. These are the areas of development that will reinforce sustainability into all aspects of the learning environment. Children learn by playing and interacting, and this is the latest educational strategy we have rolled out in schools through the ECE Curriculum.

Madam Speaker, apart from supporting them with the subject matter content and resources, we are emphasising a lot with our teachers that pedagogy is very important and that is about the knowledge on how to deliver.

Madam Speaker, we are, at present, slowly rolling out digital education in our ECE Centres. This has been done in consideration of the already built-in skills and talents of children who enter ECE, thus supporting the cause for digital sustainability. This has started off with the provision of cartoon DVDs for ECE Centres.

Madam Speaker, we are also working very closely with UNICEF, who have agreed to fund the entire development of local educational cartoons for our children. At the moment, we are at the stage of advertising for a consultant, a specialist expert who would do the cartoons, Madam Speaker. Our Ministry has already done the content part for cartoons so we are looking at recruiting the expert cartoonist, who would come and develop local educational cartoons, which will be given out free to all ECE Centres, as well as will be available to anyone to download at home and play by the children while they are looked after by their nannies.

Madam Speaker, let me now address on the Literacy and Numeracy Education at Primary level and how it encompasses sustainable education.

Madam Speaker, we have evaluated that lot of essence is given to the final years of schooling for children. However, the crux of the matter is that, we need to look at the foundation, and we need to ensure that the foundation is strong. If the foundation is strong, Madam Speaker, then the later stages of education will be easier for educators and teachers to ensure that their learning outcome is delivered at that particular level.

As such, the CDU of the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts partnered with AQEP to roll out a Literacy and Numeracy Strategy for Years 1 to 4. The new Strategy is based on student-centred learning. The students are tasked to 'do an activity, talk', that is, to engage in discussion

and then ‘record’. Teachers use the games that engage young minds to achieve the learning outcomes.

So, Madam Speaker, the whole focus is whether the learning outcome is delivered or not at the end of the day, end of the week, end of the month and end of the year, from ECE, Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, et cetera. What we are asking, is; what are the kinds of attributes we want a Year 1 who graduates should have at the end of the year? What are the attributes, skills sets should a Year 2 have at the end of the year? Similarly for Year 3, Year 4, et cetera, until Year 13. That is what we mean by whether the learning outcome has been achieved. It is not about a teacher-centred teaching approach or a teacher comes and would deliver as per the timetable, notes that are to be covered. We are now moving towards a more learning outcome-centred approach on whether the skills sets or attributes that should delivered, does the child has that at the end of Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, et cetera?

Madam Speaker, we undertook a rigorous comparative sample of 17 AQEP and 17 other schools of 322 randomly selected Year 3 girls and boys in the April Baseline to November Endline Study in 2016 to generate the evidence of the literacy learning gains of Year 3 children over a five to six months period. Madam Speaker, 85 pilot schools were introduced to the six stages of reading development. The six stages are as follows:

1. The Pre-Reader is only able to listen and respond to stories, interpret pictures, know some letters.
2. The Emergent Reader knows some sounds (phonemes) and letters for English, *iTaukei*, Hindi language, runs from left to right and top and bottom.
3. The Early Reader are able to recognise frequently used words and can read 70 percent of the words correctly in a familiar text at their level. By Year 3, a child has reached that particular stage.
4. The Developing Reader has knowledge of sentence structure and phonics, and reads at least 50 percent of the words. This is around Year 4 child’s ability to be tested.
5. The Early Fluent Reader knows the meaning of approximately 200 words and reads fluently at 60 words per minute.
6. The Independent Reader reads fluently of more than 60 words per minute, 90 to 110 words per minute, reading longer and more advanced books.

In the pilot project, students were involved with practical and interactive activities used in their classroom to promote progress through the stages. Using the Early Grade Literacy Assessment (EGRA) tool kit, it was able to clearly evidence the success of pilot initiative that provided valid data and results.

Madam Speaker, I intend to present some results that show that the new strategy works. For literacy:

- 21 percent of the children in pilot schools where the new strategy was put into place, sounded out more than 60 letters correctly in one minute, compared to 6 percent of the children in the schools where the old or existing strategy was used;

- 57 percent of the children at pilot schools correctly identified the initial sound of 10 words, compared to 31 percent of the children in non-target schools where the old strategy was used; and
- 18 percent of children in pilot supported schools were not able to read more than 15 words per minute from a connected text while for other schools it was 28 percent who were not able to read where the old strategy was utilised.

Madam Speaker, as a further demonstration of the positive impact of the regular use of literacy initiatives, the study found at the reading results of students who were regularly taught using the teaching strategies were significantly higher than those who were taught only occasionally using the Guide.

Children taught with the Guide five days a week could read an average of 61 words correctly in one minute whereas children taught with the Guide one to two days a week could only read 21 words. So, Madam Speaker, our team also tested everyday or one to two days if you use the new Guide, how the output will be.

For numeracy:

- 64 percent of children tested at the pilot schools using the numeracy initiatives could correctly read 20 numbers, compared to 35 percent in other schools where the old strategy was used.
- 52 percent of students at pilot supported schools completed five to ten missing number patterns whereas only 30 percent at the other schools.
- The skills in answering simple additional problems increased by 23 percent in pilot schools whereas in the other schools, it is only 14 percent.

Madam Speaker, looking at the positive results, the Ministry of Education, therefore, has implemented a national implementation of this programme. The training for all lower primary in-service teachers across the country in literacy and numeracy has already begun. We have trained 64 lower primary mentors, who have started to train and support 1,407 Year 1 and Year 2 teachers and all their headteachers from 736 schools.

Currently, we have trained 1,260 teachers out of the 1,407. Beginning on 1st May, 2017 the National Rollout for Numeracy Training will commence, as the mentors are being trained now who will then also train all Year 1 and Year 2 teachers in the numeracy approaches until June, 2017. Once all Year 1 and Year 2 teachers are trained in implementing these approaches, the Year 3 and Year 4 teachers will follow suit from July to November this year.

So, Madam Speaker, for the sake of our Honourable Members, let me state who these mentors are. The mentors are teachers selected from their Divisions to train the Year 1 and Year 2 and Year 3 and Year 4 teachers. It will be very difficult for us to train everyone, so we pick out these mentors from each Division, and then we train them and they will go and train the teachers in their respective Divisions.

Madam Speaker, the training manuals have four main parts, namely:

1. The process stages of reading;

2. Teacher skills and active learning;
3. Delivery of activities; and
4. Implementation of strategies in class.

Madam Speaker, we have launched this training package at the Head Teachers Conference where over 600 headteachers were there and they were given the package. Each package consists of a DVD which actually shows how literacy and numeracy is taught in a classroom so it gives them an idea, Madam Speaker; a booklet each for numeracy and literacy and each one of them has got these two booklets; and these two are the charts guiding literacy and numeracy for the schools. All schools are getting all this package. Thank you,

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

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. From the outset, I would just like to thank the Honourable Minister for Education for his Ministerial Statement on literacy and numeracy in schools. I would also like to congratulate him for listening to what FTA and FTU are saying in giving serious consideration to the foundation of child education in Fiji. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Madam Speaker, literacy is the ability to read, review, write, design, speak and listen in a way that allows us to communicate effectively and to make sense of the world. Numeracy is the ability to confidently and effectively use mathematics and figures to meet the everyday demands of life.

Madam Speaker, I wish to acknowledge with appreciation the contributions made by AQEP for their willingness in funding the Literacy and Numeracy Programme in order to improve the level of literacy and numeracy in schools, especially at the early level of education. However, I am concerned about the continuity and sustainability of this funding assistance in order for this LANA Programme to continue. While the Honourable Minister continues to engage AQEP funding for this Programme, he must also identify alternative strategies, if in case AQEP withdraws, or their term of engagement expires or for that matter UNICEF, as he has mentioned regarding cartoons.

Madam Speaker, it is also important for the Honourable Minister for Education to also include vernacular in this literacy programme. Fijian, Hindi, Urdu must also be taken on board. According to a research conducted at USP on this issue of literacy, it has been proven that all students all over the world who are literate in their mother tongue or vernacular also excel in other languages, such as English. And the Cross-Cultural Programme, Madam Speaker, which used to be in school probably if it is not there, should be brought back and strengthened. This Programme enables all students to learn each other's vernacular, apart from their own language.

Madam Speaker, providing the proper resources for students in schools is of great importance. The Honourable Minister for Education must ensure that all schools around Fiji are provided with libraries and library books to help students' literacy so that no one is left behind. Library reading must be strengthened, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, English, Vernacular and Mathematic teachers must also be well trained in order to improve their skills and teaching students to develop their level of literacy and numeracy. One cannot expect the literacy and numeracy level opportunity to improve, if they are not provided with the best facilitators of learning, especially at CDU who should be well trained and skilful in this area.

HON. MEMBER.- There is no CDU.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Yes, CAS.

Madam Speaker, putting teachers on salary grants is not enough. We want to urge the Honourable Minister for Education to put ECE teachers' salary equivalent to civil servants status. The foundation as he had mentioned, Madam Speaker, in his statement should be strong and it will be strong, if we pay the right salary to these teachers.

The Honourable Minister for Education must also work with the education stakeholders, Madam Speaker, especially the parents to also engage in assisting their children at home to be occupied in reading, writing, listening, designing, calculating, problem solving and other activities that involve literacy and numeracy.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I just want to highlight in this House that despite the order for rent increase, USP is charging its tenants about 80 percent in rental fees in the University of the South Pacific. Does the Honourable Minister for Education know about this and if he does, what is he doing about it? This House, Madam Speaker, needs to know. Thank you.

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 thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. In fact, I want to commend him the second time this week for his efforts in the area of ECE, Madam Speaker, because ECE is fundamentally crucial if you want to set the foundation for future learning for our children.

However, Madam Speaker, I agree with the Honourable Shadow Minister that he needs to look at the actual teacher positions. I think there are still many casual teachers within the ECE setup and I hope that we can have time where they are mainstreamed and they are treated like any other teachers in the system.

The other point, Madam Speaker, that I want to raise is, while listening to the Honourable Minister, I thought he was relying on a very narrow definition of numeracy and literacy. Numeracy and literacy, Madam Speaker, is not just about reading, writing and arithmetic but it is really about the capacity to understand and appreciate various forms of communication both, oral as well as written communication, for example, printed text.

Numeracy is also not limited. I think the narrow or traditional definition of numeracy, concentrating on addition, subtraction, division and multiplication, I think numeracy today goes more than that and, in fact, it is about having the mathematical understanding to solve problems and might I add, Madam Speaker, mathematical understanding is very, very crucial for life skills and problem solving in our society and amongst our children. So, I really think that the Honourable Minister ought to look at the broader definition of literacy and numeracy.

I also want to say, Madam Speaker, that while I appreciate all the efforts and strategies that he is putting in place to improve that, I think we need to have a proper national assessment. I do not think we have one and I do not think we have had that for a long time but we need to have one possibly at all levels from pre-school right up to say, Year 13, because the problem of literacy and numeracy in the definition that I gave earlier, Madam Speaker, does not rest only in the lower level classes of primary school, it goes right up to Year 13.

I think we need an expert national assessment and as a result of that, we need an understanding of where we are in terms of numeracy and literacy skills at all levels. So, I would suggest to the Honourable Minister to make that assessment or to get experts to do that assessment, so that we know

exactly what is happening. Then, I think, some of the strategies that he is putting in place, Madam Speaker, will make sense and will target the areas where we are having difficulties with the literacy and numeracy problems.

Madam Speaker, just *prima facie* evidence shows that we have had a serious decline in numeracy and literacy skill levels at all levels in our schools and I also think a broader definition of that in the universities as well. So, my question to the Honourable Minister would be as follows:

1. He needs to look at national assessment and then look at the exact strategies;
2. He needs to look at how effective the libraries are, having just libraries is not enough, whether students have regular books;
3. Whether the training of teachers is having the desired impact; and
4. How effective are some of the remedial lessons on top of the established curriculum that goes on for a year?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members, I seek your leave to complete our Ministerial Statement with just one more ministerial statement now because we have quite a lot to do in the afternoon. Is there any opposition?

Since there is no opposition, I now give the floor to the Honourable Minister for Forests. You will note that there has been a change in our Order Paper and the Honourable Minister for Forests is presenting and this has been approved by both Houses. Thank you. Honourable Minister?

#### Wairiki Chip Mill - Contribution to Development of Northern Division

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Cabinet Colleagues, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members of the House, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen; I thank the Honourable Opposition Whip, Honourable Salote Radrodro and Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, for accepting my short notice and my neighbour for giving up his space.

Madam Speaker, my statement today is focussed on the Wairiki Chip Mill and how it has contributed to the development in the North. I thank Honourable Dr. Brij Lal for withdrawing his question yesterday to allow me to present my Ministerial Statement today.

The FAO Forest Sector Study for Fiji proposed a strategy to maximize the sustainable contribution of the sector to the development and diversification of the economy, whilst bringing the *iTaukei* people into fuller and more active participation in sectoral development at all levels and stages. This included the provision of an enabling environment for the sector in which basic infrastructure provisions were made to facilitate export.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Forests through a Capital Project was able to establish the Wairiki Port, to provide the enabling structure for export of pine products from Vanua Levu. The Chip Mill in Wairiki was constructed by Tropik Wood Industries Ltd. in order to cut costs in the transportation of pine to Viti Levu for processing and export of chips.

The product mix for the Vanua Levu forest is predominantly pulp logs, Madam Speaker. Therefore, the majority of the logs produced from the Vanua Levu pine forest will need to be processed into pine chips. A small proportion of the logs could be economically converted to sawn

timber. Given the distance of the Vanua Levu pine forest to the sawmill in the Northern Division, conversion of sawn timber would be uneconomical due to diseconomy of scale.

Tropik Wood Industries, Madam Speaker, is the only wood-chipping company in Fiji and has two plants, one in Lautoka and the other is the Wairiki Chip Mill. The Company is engaged in the manufacture and marketing of woodchips, sawn timber and other forest products.

Woodchips are exported to Japan and is Tropik's major product, contributing around two-thirds of Tropik Woods Industries' total revenue. Madam Speaker, the process of chip exports involves the buying of pulp from Fiji Pine and then turning it into wood chips at the facility and exporting to overseas markets in Japan and China.

The Wairiki Chip Mill is very important to the local economy of Vanua Levu and the nation as a whole in terms of export revenue and job creation. Further, the Wairiki Chip Mill supports part of Government's Look North Policy, targeted towards boosting economic growth in the Northern Division and at the same time, ensuring that local people are assisted through employment, instead of transporting resources to the Lautoka Chipping Mill in Viti Levu.

Vanua Levu's economy particularly, in the bottom half from Dreketi to Nabouwalu was stagnant for ages, Madam Speaker. People's livelihood was mainly dependent on what they could earn from fishing and selling cash crops. The only time you could see vehicles going past Bua Settlement is when ferries dock at Nabouwalu Jetty. Reaching people through mobile connectivity was even not possible.

Those are now things of the past with the introduction of Wairiki Chip Mill operations. During construction phase, one of the key challenges was to decide on how we going to take the heavy machinery across to such an isolated place like Wairiki. For the information of Honourable Members, a vessel was chartered to bring chipping machinery and other equipment from New Zealand directly to Nabouwalu. This is how challenging things were during this period. However, the management team had a clear vision that was driven from the Honourable Prime Minister to set up this venture to drive the economy of Vanua Levu.

Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thanked the paramount chief of Bua, Ratu Suliasi Matavesi, for his commitment and support for the project. Wairiki Mill is located at a place where there is no FEA grid power. Normally, businesses setup at locations where they have cost efficiencies. A chipping plant is entirely run through power and we had to setup 2 x 2 megawatts diesel generators to run this factory which is an additional economy to the people of Bua and Vanua Levu as a whole.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister was actively involved in monitoring the progress of factory construction and also launched the first-ever pine harvesting operations in Bua in April 2012 which was a landmark achievement. We have an international port at Wairiki, specifically for wood chip exports which has so far generated \$97.8 million in export revenue since inception. A place where we could hardly see any land transport now receives a woodchip carrier.

The Wairiki Chip Mill has over these last five years, produced and exported a total of 673,365 gross metric tonnes of chips, worth \$97, 798,532 (approximately \$97.8 million). This is mostly from Bua forests only and does not include the exports from Viti Levu pine plantations.

Through the Wairiki venture, the communities of Bua and Macuata benefit hugely:

1. They are engaged in logging and cartage operations. Currently they have the following logging contractors:
  - a) Bua Provincial Council Company Limited;
  - b) Bua Forest-Base Development Company Limited;
  - c) Premier Logging Company Limited; and
  - d) Wairiki Logging Company Limited.
2. They are engaged in the factory operations. The Company has also provided different skills training to our landowners, who have later joined the Company.
3. They are engaged in forest replanting and silviculture operations.

Apart from the economic returns to the country based on these exports from Wairiki Chip Mill, Madam Speaker, the Fiji Pine Limited has continued with its social and financial obligations to the communities with which they have collaboratively worked with since the commencement of the Wairiki Chip Mill.

Madam Speaker, in the last sitting, Honourable Bilitavu selectively asked a question as to why only Premier Logging is given a contracts and not the landowners. I take this opportunity to educate the other side of the House...

(Laughter)

...that there are two landowner-based companies that have direct contracts with Fiji Pine Limited.

While Premier Logging is one of the contractors, the harvesting crews and machine operators are all landowners. They engage landowner-based gangs to operate under them and they play a part in providing machines and managing the operations.

Madam Speaker, before Wairiki commenced operations, Bua Forest Base Company Limited and Macuata Forest Base Company Limited were operating in Viti Levu Pine Forest. Premier, is a pine landowner company from Viti Levu in Lololo Forest.

Madam Speaker, it would seem that the Honourable Member is trying to incite division and politicise the participation of landowners in the pine industry.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Very poor, very poor.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Unity is paramount because of the risks associated with the pine industry. The major risk is fire which is manmade, and cyclone. The effects of the 1987 political upheaval is still felt by the industry to-date. These are the facts on the ground, Madam Speaker. Just last year, Fiji Pine Limited invested \$80,000 to set up a generator in Wairiki Village. All the houses were wired up and power switched on 24th December last year. A request was made to the Honourable Prime Minister, who then approached Fiji Pine Limited if this can be carried out as part of its social responsibility.

Having said that Madam Speaker, since 2012, the Company has paid off a total of \$1,671,963.41 in levies to the Bua Forests over the 5 years. This includes the 3 percent forest-base levy paid to the forest-based companies to venture into business activities with the Pine Industry, ensuring increasing landowner participation and returns. A 2.5 percent forest trust levy is also paid

to the Forest Based Trust for community based projects which supports food security and livelihoods of these communities.

This is not all, Madam Speaker, the Fiji Pine Limited has also remarkably introduced Lease Security Bonus Payments since 2014, and have already made four payments to date, amounting to a total of \$3,171,995. This payment distributions, Madam Speaker, was officiated by the Honourable Prime Minister and is a share of the FPL Group's profit to its landowners.

Not only has this initiative given increased returns to the pine landowners, it has also brought back confidence in the Pine Industry. We have already seen significant results in terms of land lease renewals, having renewed 23,434 hectares of pine leases, Madam Speaker.

Apart from the revenue generated through the Wairiki Chip Mill, this development by Tropik Woods Industries has led to generation of employment, not only through job creation at the Mill but also the logging crews, who harvest and bring the logs to the Mill, contractors and all others engaged in the replanting of pine as well in the Northern Division to ensure sustainability of supply to the Chip Mill.

This is what we call progress and achievement, Madam Speaker, and Fiji Pine with Tropik Wood Industries Limited has not only excelled in its economic contributions but upheld its social commitments to the communities whose land supplies them with their resources. Tropik Woods Industries continues to work closely with the various stakeholders to foster a long term working partnership in order to ensure the viability of the Mill to the Fiji economy. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, to start with, the Honourable Minister should get his facts right because Premier Logging and Wairiki logging companies are companies that are under contract and they sub-contract to these local companies. Both of these companies are from Lautoka, that is the fact of the equation.

To start with, Madam Speaker, the history of Fiji Pine and Tropik Woods subsidiary in this country is the history of exploitation of the indigenous resource owners, whose pines are being used. I say this on behalf of the landowners where the pine schemes are - Nabou, Lololo, Dawasamu, Bua and Lau. I mean, it is very, very sad. You can easily go into one of these villages and see and confirm that their way of life has not changed. The same tinned roofs that they were living under are still there and right beside it, you see these big pine trees or schemes. We ask them; who owns it? They do not own it.

When the Fiji Pine Scheme was started, they were told that they were not going to own this industry. You are going to own this company, green gold, but it is not. It is owned by Fiji Pine and they do not have any equity in that. As I say this I want to ask the Government, we are not in Government now and I do not speak for SODELPA but if I am in control, I will make sure that the owners of that company. You give them 50 percent.

In the same way, you should see the mahogany plantation owned by Fiji Mahogany Company Limited, in the same way that you should give Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) to the farmers, that is the way to go. The Government should release control because only in that way they can say that they fully participate. You know, totally exploited! They gave their land generously. In some cases, they were paying 25 cents a hectare for this to Fiji Pine. In some other cases, they gave their reserve

land. They were even allowed; “You, plant your pine on our reserve” because they were waiting for the time for the Government to give them the ownership of these, but no! It is very sad.

You go to these villages, you go to the villages in Nabou, Dawasamu and Bua because I go there. Do you go there? In Dawasamu, after *TC Winston*, they are sitting here and pine trees are everywhere. But they cannot go there to use it because they do not own it, and that is totally sad. Very very sad indeed.

Now, they talk about \$3 million which was granted by the Honourable Prime Minister. That is like peanuts! That is the same thing that the white settlers of this country did to our grandparents. They gave them peanuts so that we could give our land. You gave that money so that they continue to exploit them and if you divide this to the landowners, they come to \$30 each.

Back to what the Honourable Minister said, first he said that the purpose of Wairiki was to bring the *itaukei* people in effective participation. Have you been there? I was there, it is not happening. Have you been to their villages there? It is not happening! They still live in the same house. If you go to Wairiki you, will see that the employees there are coming from Lautoka and Suva. And you ask the people there; “Are you employed there?” They said; “No”. There is a scheme there that is giving them employment. It employed 300 people and in these places, none. These people did nothing. You come and talk here like it is rosy but there is nothing there. You go, you sit down with them, and you will see. Nothing!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Order! Let us hear him out, please. Viewers would like to hear him. We will give him an extra minute for that.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you.

Next, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister said that the majority of the logs produced from the pine posts are processed into Fiji pine chips. That is very very sad because you are denying the owners there, their ability or opportunity to sell logs. And it is no longer true now to say that the cost is too much. You go there! You will see that the roads are much better there now, so all these are misrepresentation.

In terms of export, the Honourable Minister said that it is employing far more people. No! It is not employing far more people. There is an industry there, and they were taking sap and it was employing 300 people. There was a bus load, Parmod Buses, going from Solevu, going back to Bua and taking 300 people a day. Then you compare that to how many they are employing at Wairiki – three, four or five people, who are coming from Suva and Lautoka. So do not come here and misrepresent your positions here. You are totally wrong!

In terms of the people’s livelihood it has not changed, it is still the same because all the income, all the profit has been taken elsewhere and they do not even own the trees there, so it is totally sad.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for the statement and the update that was given to this House. The Wairiki Pine Chip Mill has not been without a share of concerns and we once again urge the Government to ensure that the landowners are in the driver's seat, and that there is fairness in the equation. There must be fairness in the equation. And I note that the Honourable Minister has begun consultations with landowners. Madam Speaker, however, to echo the NFP Leader's statement on forestry and REDD++ made in this august House only yesterday, cutting down trees is at complete odds with their climate change pathway.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. P. CHAND.- As Honourable Professor Biman Prasad stated yesterday, here is a thin line that the Minister must weigh between development which requires that cutting down of natural forestry and maintaining a good pool of natural forest cover. The Government will struggle to gobble together the carbon it needs for trading under REDD++ mechanisms if we continue down this road."

Madam Speaker, reforestation we know was introduced earlier with the push for the planting of one million trees. Again, we ask; what is the status of this initiative? When you go around Vanua Levu or anywhere, you see a lot of loggers going logging and after they have logged, there a lot of piles of timber still left there which was not taken to the mill which has loss of revenue, loss of income, loss of all sorts of royalties. So, Madam Speaker, it is important that these kinds of things need to be enforced. What is needed is for the Minister for Forests to consult openly and not go through this alone to ensure that landowners are at the table.

The World Bank loan documents for REDD++ is very clear on this. Madam Speaker, it is important for us in this House to hear out properly what we need to say. Also, there is something that I have noticed on many occasions that woodchips at the Wairiki Mill have been left beside the road and also wood peelings that has caused a lot of fires and smoke coming up early in the morning. A lot of vehicles are involved in accidents and this must be looked into and sorted out very properly.

Madam Speaker, we know that the Government is challenged by real solutions for looking North but can I assure this House that NFP is ready with our answers that are ground-up and sustainable. We are a responsible Party, we are able to do it, we can give a lot of advice to them if they learn to hear properly, Madam Speaker. If they cannot hear, they cannot hear and they do not want to hear, so I would simply put it to the Government to learn to listen to the Opposition so that they can also make some very calculated moves and have the pine industry and the wood chip mill run well and properly.

It was very rightly pointed out by Honourable Nawaikula that that glue that was being taken out was stopped, which was a lot of revenue for our people in the Northern Division. It was helping the people and we do not know for what reason it was held back, but Madam Speaker, we do understand that there is a problem in this industry and it really needs to be shaken up placed in the right place. But the Government has to play its part. The Government is not playing its part, only too much loud-mouthed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, at this point, we will adjourn the proceedings for lunch. Please, note that lunch is provided for Honourable Members in the Big Committee Room.

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 1.0 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.35 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will resume our meeting this afternoon, we will move on to the next Item.

### **DEBATE ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2017**

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- The Committee of the whole Parliament on a Bill for an Act to amend the Higher Education Promulgation, 2008, Bill No. 2 of 2016.

In Committee:

Clause 1:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments on Clause 1.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, prior to even Clause 1, I would like to move:

That the Long Title of the Bill be amended by deleting “Promulgation” and substituting it with the word “Act”, given the fact that this Bill is drafted prior to the consolidation of the Laws of Fiji and, therefore, we no longer have promulgation and the word “promulgation” will be substituted with the word “Act”.

Just by way of notice, Madam Chairperson, we will be making those stylistic amendments throughout the Bill.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There is an amendment being moved and the amendment is that the Long Title of the Bill be amended by deleting the word “promulgation” and substituting it with the word “Act”.

Does anyone would like to comment on this?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I believe the process is that, the Honourable Minister proposes this, then we will vote on the question of whether to set it off to another date and then we go on to the next one.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No!

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- This is the third reading.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is the procedure for the third reading, I am sure I am right.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- This is Committee of Supply.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Even Committee.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else want to speak on this particular amendment?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, just a clarification, I am just confused here because I do not remember us having any debate on the Bill itself and because we never debated

the report as well. I think this is the second reading. When are we going to have debate on the Bill itself?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- This is being done before actually.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I do not remember because I was waiting for debate on this both the Higher Education and the National Assets Council Bill. I do not remember us having a debate unless ....

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We are considering Bill which has been tabled back from the Committee and this was done last year.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- But the point here is that from the Committee came the Report when we had not debate on the Bill before we are going to the Committee of Supply.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We had a debate on this before it went to the Committee. On the Second reading.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No. These Bills, Madam Chairperson, my understanding is that these bills ....

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Excuse me. The Chair of the Committee there ....

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam, I would just like to clarify on some of the issues. We had a debate then after that this was referred to our committee and we have already tabled the Report back in the House. Thank you very much.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The debate has taken place.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I stand to be corrected on this and I would like to see some evidence that we actually had a debate on this Bill. Because I know I was interested in both this two Bills. Unless I was not in the Parliament.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Probably.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- This was well last year and I think I was around but I cannot remember.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Just a clarification on that issue the Report of the Committee was submitted back in June last year but we never debated after that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- This is the debate. We are debating on the Report of the Committee. These amendments were from the Committee, we are debating it now again.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- (Inaudible) where we are in Committee and proposals for amendments on a clause by clause can be put and we vote on that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, we will go clause by clause, but amendments first before we go into the clause.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes, I am posing that amendment.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- But we are addressing clause by clause at the moment so now we are starting with the heading. After that, we go to clause 1 and I am opposing the change of the heading.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other opposition. So Parliament will vote on this amendment that the long title of the Bill be amended by deleting Promulgations and substituting Acts. Any opposition? There being Opposition, Parliament will vote on this amendment.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to ask one question. For the reason why I am posing, it is a very small reason. The reason is consistency because we have within our laws decrees that were passed in 1987 and during the *coups*. When we sight this, even here or in the Courts, we still refer to that as Decrees or Promulgation so once we change this, these ones become Act so it will be inconsistent. For consistency, this should be maintained. That i my only reason. There is still Decree, something of 1980 and 1982 or employment promulgation 2007 is an example. Anyway, that is my reason.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, I would like to say to Honourable Nawaikula that he really needs to update his practise because these laws were amended last year. Parliament actually approved in the consolidation of the laws in Fiji that all the Decrees whether it is from 87 whether it is from 2000 or whether it is from Post 5 December 2006. All the decrees and Promulgations will now be known as ACTS. I urge him to read the free copy that was provided to the office of the Honourable Leader of Opposition, which actually shows and which is also displayed in other places that you can actually. It shows you that all this Promulgation Decrees are now collapsed and if you are still referring them to his Decrees and Promulgation, please don't because you will be legally incorrect if you are in a court of law. Madam Speaker, it is quite....

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- This is procedural advice?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is essentially procedural and stylistic to catch up with the times.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, we will now vote on this. Shall we agree on this substitution? Do you all agree?

(Chorus of "ayes")

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Parliament will now vote on clause one. The question is; Clause one as amended stands part of the Bill. Does any member oppose the motion?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, that was in respect of the long title. I have an amendment to clause one of the Bill, Madam Speaker which I have not given it to you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There is amendment to Clause one before we vote. Can we have the amendment please?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, I would like to move an amendment to Clause one of the Bill that is, firstly, in subsection one to delete "2016 to 2017". Obviously we are no longer in 2016. We are in 2017.

The second amendment is deleting “shall come” in clause two and substituting it with ‘comes’. It should read “This Act comes into force” as opposed to ‘shall come’.

Madam Chairperson, in sub-clause three, again Madam Speaker, would like to delete “Promulgation” and replace with ‘principal Act’. Again, to delete “shall be” and substitute it with ‘is’. Madam Speaker, again to delete “Promulgation” and replace it with ‘principal Act’. I understand the Honourable Members already have copies of this Bill with the marked up amendments that are being sort.

MADAM. CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do you have a seconder to these amendments?

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do you have any comments? There being none, we shall now vote on the amendments.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Just on section 1 (3), in this Act, “the Higher Education Promulgation 2008”, so that has been changed to ‘Act’, but we are referring to 2008 when this was a promulgation, it is referred to now as principal Act.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Attorney General, if you can please clarify this.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, if I can gather what you are saying, Your questioning is to why it is being called the principal Act.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- No, I am questioning that in 2008, we are referring to the Promulgation that was not an Act but now it should be referred to as the principal Act.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, if the Honourable Member may recall, last year when Parliament approved this in the consolidation of laws, we actually said that anything even though it may have been a Promulgation at that time now they are referred to as an Act. So the VAT Decree that was passed by post 87 1990 is now called a VAT Act. This is the reason why even though the Higher Education Promulgation came to effect in 2008 as a Promulgation, it is now referred to as the Act. In this Bill, it will be referred to as the principal Act.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you with that clarification? Any other Comments? There being none, we shall vote on the acceptance of this amendment. Does anyone oppose? There being no opposition, it has been agreed to numinously. Thank you. We will now move onto Clause 2. Secretary General.

Clause 2 - the floor is now open for comments on Clause 2. Honourable Attorney General, please.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, again following alignment as to what we have just done now, in Clauses 1 and 2, for the ‘promulgation’ to be substituted with the words ‘principal Act’. Thank you Madam.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON - Thank you. Any seconder?

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON - Thank you. This is actually procedural, just based on what has been approved before. Does anyone oppose?

(Chorus of 'noes')

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

Clause 3:

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, again in Clause 3, would like the word "promulgation" to be replaced by 'principal Act'. Further down in clause 3, over the page, in the marked up copy of the Bill, after the word "universities" to put the word 'and' and in sub-clause (b), again to replace the word "promulgation" with the word 'Act'.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have a seconder?

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON. - Again this is procedural. Does anyone oppose?

(Chorus of "noes")

There being no opposition.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Thank you. We will move on to Clause 4.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Thank you Madam Chair. Again the word 'promulgation' to be replaced with the words 'principal Act'.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON. - Do we have a seconder?

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON - Again this is procedural. Any opposition?

(Chorus of "noes")

There being none. Thank you. We move on to Clause 5.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5:

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Thank you, Madam Chair. In Clause 5, Madam Chair, again replacing "promulgation" with 'principal Act'. Madam Chair, also in the paragraph below which is marked "3" to delete the hyphen in 'degree awarding'. It is not a hyphenated word. Also to replace "shall we" with 'is'. That is just a stylistic drafting style, in conformity to make sure all the laws are drafted in the similar way. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have a seconder?

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON. - There any opposition?

(Chorus of “noes”)

There being no opposition. Thank you.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clause 6:

We will now move on to Clause 6. Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Thank you Madam Chair. Madam Chair, again the word “promulgation” to be replaced with the words ‘principal Act’ and again deleting the hyphen in the words ‘degree awarding’. Thank you Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON. - Thank you. Do you have a seconder?

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON. - Do we have any comments? If any? Any opposition to this amendment?

(Chorus of “noes”)

There being none. Thank you.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7:

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Thank you, Madam Chair. Again Madam Chair, the word “promulgation” to be replaced with the words ‘principal Act’.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON. - Do we have a seconder?

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON - Thank you. This is again procedural. Any opposition?

(Chorus of “noes”)

There being none. Thank you.

Clause 7 agreed to.

Clause 8:

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, again to remove the hyphen between the words “degree and awarding” and secondly to replace the word

'promulgation' with "principal Act" and to replace the words 'shall be' with 'are'. Madam Chair, delete the words altogether and then replace the word, "promulgation" with 'principal Act'. Thank you Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON - Thank you. Do we have a seconder?

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON - Any comments on those amendments? There being none.

Do we all agree that it should be adopted?

(Chorus of "ayes")

Clause 8 agreed to.

This brings us to the end of the Committee of the Whole Parliament. Parliament will now resume its sitting and I shall now resume the Chair.

The House resumed:

The Committee of the Whole Parliament has agreed to A Bill for an Act to Amend the Higher Education Promulgation 2008, Bill No. 2 of 2016, with amendments by the Committee of the Whole Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER. - I now call on the Honourable Attorney- General, Minister for Economy, Public Enterprise, Civil Service and Communications to move the third reading.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I move:

That the Higher Education Amendment Act 2017 be read a third time and be passed..

HON. SPEAKER. - Thank you. Do we have a seconder?

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

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, very briefly the Higher Education Amendment Bill 2016 as was tabled then, it was tabled in Parliament on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February, 2016 for the first reading, and 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016 for the second reading, and seeks to amend the Higher Education Act of 2008.

Madam Speaker, the Bill broadens the definition of Higher Education Institution, encompasses all types of Higher Education Institutions whether they are local or foreign based. Madam Speaker, in addition, the broaden definition will cover all Higher Education Institution whether they provide academic studies or vocational training.

The Bill also Madam Speaker, through the amendment also allows the Higher Education Commission to authorise the establishment of those Higher Education Institution that do not fall under the category of either University Degree Awarding Institute of Technology.

Madam Speaker, just by way of background, just to refresh the memories of the Honourable Members of Parliament, as this was presented to us last year, that was created in 2008, the principal Act, to create a legal framework for the operation of the Higher Education Commission and to monitor and regulate all Higher Education Institution in Fiji.

The Higher Education Commission commences operation on 1st January, 2010. After six years of its operation Madam Speaker, the Higher Education Commission has deemed it necessary to make certain amendments to bring the law up to date with current time and to factor in the changes which have been made necessary by globalisation, in the movement of students, institutions and programmes across the borders. The phenomenal growth of different types of Higher Education providers in the last ten years including private online, cross border, and distance education.

Indeed the diversity in the delivery modes resulting from the rapid pace of ICT development which is changing the paradigms of teaching and learning. We have many things that used to happen before, for example, like online courses.

During the last 10 years, Madam Speaker, the number of Higher Education Institutions are significantly increasing in Fiji and this institution provide a variety of programmes of study. The number of tertiary institutes, students have also increased significantly, of course due to the awareness and interest in the tertiary education and of course Government TELS' programme, the top scholarship, and of course the Technical Colleges that have been set up throughout Fiji now.

Of course, Madam Speaker, we must not forget that there are movement of students to Fiji to study here, we have seen for example, Japan, Korea and various other places, to learn English and up skill themselves in various other areas. Madam Speaker, the Bill has been created to bring all Higher Education Institution operating in Fiji on a single piece of law. Therefore, the definition of Higher Education Institution has been extended to include all institution providing post-Secondary Education in Fiji.

Previously, the definition is only limited to local Higher Education Institutions that provide post-Secondary Education. Furthermore, the definition only encompass local Higher Education Institutions. The new definition operating encompasses all Higher Education Institutions conducting any activity in any medium whether they are based locally or out from overseas.

This will bring all Higher Education Institutions under the jurisdiction of the Act, regardless of the address and span of time in which they provide Higher Education. This new definition, Madam Speaker, will help reduce the number of Higher Education Institutions which intend to operate only for short period of time or those that do not allow students to complete their programmes of study. Such institutions may close down all of a sudden and leave students frustrated and cheated in that in fact, that has already happened, Madam Speaker.

This new provision will reduce the number of higher education institutions which only intends to make money. The amendment to Section 13 Madam Speaker, has now made it mandatory for all types of higher education institutions to be established and registered under the provision of the Higher education Act.

The amendment to Section 17 authorises the higher education commission to provide authority for the establishment of an institution which does not fall into that category of either a university or degree awarding institute of technology. Previously, a high education institution could only be authorised by legislation but now the commission also has powers to authorise a higher education institution.

The term 'university' and degree awarding institute of technology have been removed from the Act and replaced with the term 'higher education institution' to cover all types of post-secondary education providers. Madam Speaker, as we know the Standing Committee has actually fully endorsed the Bill, the amendments that we have propose are simply stylistic in nature, to comply with the revised addition of laws of Fiji, I will stop there now, am sure there are many speakers and indeed also the Honourable Minister for Education wants to speak on this. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Bill is now open for debate. Each member may speak up to 20 minutes while I must remind you that the debate will only be on whether the Bill should pass and not on the content. Thank you and I invite any input if any.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD. - Thank you. Madam Speaker, I think the intention of the Bill to change the definition of Higher Education Institution makes sense and the arguments presented by the Honourable Attorney-General looks fine, but my concern is that if we pass this Bill without looking at the role of the Fiji Higher Education Commission, then the objectives of this Bill in terms of ensuring the quality of programmes in those institutions, I am afraid, is not going to be scrutinised as carefully as we can.

My understanding of the Fiji Higher Education Commission Act and when it was promulgated in 2008, I thought it was a very good thing to do so that you have a body which looks after the curriculum, the quality issues, more importantly the quality issues in these institutions. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the Higher Education Commission really has remained the toothless tiger.

In fact, it consumed about a \$1 million budget and is really not being able to deal with the universities and higher education institutions in a way that its role was expected and I am not sure what is the reason for that, whether they do not have the appropriate skills, whether they do not have the enabling environment, whether there is overlap of roles by university and other higher education institution heads with the Fiji Higher Education Commission and I thought this Bill should have also looked at how the Higher Education Commission could be strengthened so that we deal with not only the definition of High Education Institution but also the quality and I know Madam Speaker, that there are institutions.

The Honourable Usamate would know when the FNU was created, again a very noble intention and there was a very specific purpose for that and the Higher Education Commission was to look at the rationalisation ....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Point of Order and clarification. The third reading was to have gone through the Committee, we have a debate on whether the Bill should be passed or not. The Honourable Prasad is talking about the Higher Education Commission itself and whether it is doing well or not. I just want a clarification whether is that allowed within the ambit because the debate is about whether the Bill should be passed or not. If there is an opposition to the Bill, then they must state why they oppose the Bill...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD. - Precisely the point I was making.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - but Honourable Prasad is going on about saying that this Bill should have included other things in it, so in a way we do not get a sense of whether you are opposing the Bill or whether you are for the Bill. That is my clarification.

HON. SPEAKER. - Actually Honourable Biman Prasad is not speaking on the content of the Bill, he is justifying what he is going to contribute, Sir.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD. - Precisely Madam Speaker, which is the point I was trying to make. I am saying that this Bill would have been better if it had addressed the whole issue of the role of the Higher Education Commission and the reason why I am saying that is, there are institutions that we have now, and I was giving the example of Fiji National University when it was set up. There was a technical institute before and they had a lot of technical programmes and Honourable Usamate would know when the FNTC was there, then shifted to FNU, they are very specific role in terms of training skill people.

Over the last three or four years of five years, Madam Speaker, there has been no serious quality check and rationalisation, I mean universities which was supposed to produce high level of qualifications, concentrate on research are actually engaging in technical courses which was previously done by FNU.

So, what I am saying is, that we need to get a Bill, we need to look at the role of the Fiji Higher Education Commission, in line with the new definition of High Education Institution, so that we can not only address the issue of how the institutions are running in terms of who comes and whether students get their money, get the products, but also the quality of the product and that I think is not being addressed and as I said, the Fiji Higher Education Commission has been a failure in many ways. So, that is why this Bill on its own cannot be supported, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER. - Thank you Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts.

HON. DR. M. REDDY. - Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that Honourable Biman Prasad has taken this opportunity to make allegation on the Higher Education Commission, Madam Speaker, he has just said that the Higher Education Commission is not functioning, not doing its job, look Madam Speaker, I want to ask Honourable Biman Prasad when did he go and find out what the Higher Education Commission is doing? Whom did he talked to? Did he talk to me? Did he talk to the Chairman of the High Education Commission? Did he talk to the Director of the High Education Commission? No.

Madam Speaker, they have a habit of passing accusations without doing their homework, Madam Speaker. He has never, he has never, if I asked him, Madam Speaker, if I asked him who is the new Chairman of the High Education Commission is? I doubt that he will give the name.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI. - That is not the issue.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD. - That is not the point of order. I think the Honourable Member is using wrong words and alleging that I am casting aspersions on people who are there. All I was saying Madam Speaker, was the role of the Higher Education Commission, he should address that

HON. SPEAKER. - Order! Order. You addressed a Point of Order, Point of Order is on the rules and procedures and not the content of what he said.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM. - Madam Speaker, Point of Order. All of us in this House we need to stick to the manner which all of us need to address. We do not call the Leader of Opposition, Honourable Member, we call the Leader of Opposition, The Leader of Opposition. The Honourable Minister for Education is Honourable Mahendra Reddy, if the Honourable Member is going to mention the Honourable Minister for Education, he needs to say the Honourable Minister and not Honourable Member.

(Hon. Opposition Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You said, Honourable Member, and I objected to you, you heard me say that. Madam Speaker, please, if the Honourable Member is responding to an Honourable Minister he wishes to refer to, you should call him the Honourable Minister. There is nothing wrong in calling him Honourable Minister because he is in fact the Honourable Minister.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. I think in protocol, you say the Honourable Minister in your reference to the post and then you can say Honourable Member after that, but please note what has been said.

Thank you. Honourable Minister you may continue.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, prior to the establishment of the Higher Education Commission to have a tertiary institution, either you have a separate, legislation like the legislation for the University of the South Pacific or the legislation for the Fiji National University. What tertiary institution used to do which came out, they used to register as a commercial company under the Companies Act.

Madam Speaker, treating education which is a public good as a private good is quite risky, people invest a lot of money, Madam Speaker. So, this legislation is to ensure that institutions fall under this legislation. Therefore, their operations and the products that they provide do come under the purview of the Commission, particularly, the quality aspect.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, it seems to me that Honourable Professor Biman Prasad does not understand how, at the moment, Higher Education Commission examines the quality of the existing programmes, as well as well as new programmes; how the Higher Education Commission requires the Universities to provide to the Higher Education Commission the new programmes; what are the checklist that needs to adhere to before the Higher Education Commission approves the provision of this particular programme by the this University.

Madam Speaker, what has happened over the last decades as alluded to by the Honourable Minister for Economy is that, we have got a proliferation of a number of external providers. Therefore, the amendment is to empower the Higher Education Commission to also check the quality of these programmes that are offered by institutions which are based overseas.

Madam Speaker, in a nutshell, the change in the definition of the Higher Education Commission institution allows Higher Education Commission to check the product that is offered by the institutions which are based outside Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I do hope that Honourable Members here look at the legislation and its intended purpose rather than using this opportunity to cast aspersions on other aspect of the institution. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister for Labour?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I would like the support the amendment that has been proposed, firstly, because it brings standardisation into the way that we are referring to all these legislations. We are taking out the word “promulgation” and we are showing that it has come through Parliament and the word “Act” is being used.

The second reason that I fully support this is because of the fact that we are broadening the definition of Higher Education Institutions. We all know that in our country now, we have a great need for people with technical skills and a lot of times when we talk about the need for developing

our workforce, we ourselves tend to demean qualifications in areas that are not seen as leading to Degrees. So by including this into that definition of Higher Education, we are showing that these things are equally important. Qualification in Trade Certificates or Diploma which are vocational skills for them to be included and to be encompassed in this term of Higher Education Institutions and Higher Education sorts of learning. So the broadening of that definition is a good progress to what we are trying to do which is develop a skilled workforce, we are trying to encourage people not just to focus on getting Degrees but it is equally important to get trade and vocational qualification. So the broadening of the definition is something that I really appreciate.

I think one of the other aspects that I hope that this will lead to is that, we have a lot of sectors, pockets in our population where there is good training being carried out that does not articulate into a formal qualification. I will give you an example, there is a lot of good leadership and operational management training that takes place in the Military in terms of their short courses, and there are various types of programmes that they run here. But it does not lead into a formal Diploma in Management or a Degree in Management, and I am hoping that as a result of this, we will establish all sorts of pathways, so people do get some elements of competence of learning that it leads into a formal qualification that could ultimately be recognised by one of the Universities through the work that is undertaken by the Fiji Higher Education Commission and the portability of the learning that they acquire from one Institute, transfers and articulates into a qualification under another one.

The other reason that I fully support this particular development is that, we are focusing on removing the 'fly by night' operators. There is an element of quality assurance here. I think the people in Fiji have the right to expect if there is an education provider, operating in Fiji that it is vetted by an agency to make sure that what they pay for is what they get.

The last reason that I fully support this amendment is because we believe that one of the most important things that we need to do in this country is to assure skill developments. Skill development, establishing a better workforce will attract investment into our country and will enhance employment opportunities.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Viam Pillay?

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I rise to support the Bill and contribute to the motion before the House on the Higher Education (Amendment) Bill, Bill No. 2 of 2016.

Madam Speaker, the Committee in its deliberation on the Bill agreed to the proposed amendment, given that the Bill will strengthen the Higher Education law in terms of the control of Higher Education Institutions which are in Fiji and also included for those overseas institutions that are operating in Fiji as well.

In this regard, Madam Speaker, I believe that this amendment law will ensure good governance, productivity and quality education and training are given to the individuals who will have access to Higher Education Institutions in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I supported these amendments made to the Higher Education law as it will counter the ever-changing Higher Education environment in terms of use of new technologies and globalisation of the Higher Education.

Finally, Madam Speaker, with those inputs I support the motion before the House.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Nawaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I wish to make a few comments. The first point to remember is that, this legislation was the baby of this side of the House, we started it. We started it at the time when 'fly by night' operators were coming up and this was our proposal and Dr. Tupeni Baba looked into it and the outcome is this legislation.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Higher education came in 2010 in Parliament.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The question here, Madam Speaker, is whether this should be stood off to another day and for what reasons. The reasons that I wish to put forward is, for further consultation.

There is really a need for this to consult the Universities because the Universities regulate their own, so how do they tie on to this?

HON. J. USAMATE.- That is not easy.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Secondly, you need to further consult with the people who are going to run this. This is a very, very poor institution, the Higher Education Commission. They are still catching the bus, they do not have money, so can you please consult them and come back when you have enough money because they are crying out for money, they cannot operate. They do not have enough vehicles, they need to go throughout Fiji and they have been borrowing vehicles, hiring cars, ride in the bus. They should not do that so please, go back to them, assess what they need and come back.

HON. J. USAMATE.- A Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Point of order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- The Honourable Member has mentioned that the establishment of the Higher Education Commission has come out of something that they proposed. I think that is a blatant lie because if you look at this Act, the Higher Education Act came out in 2008, that is before we had the Parliament. So how can they stand up and say that they are the ones behind this development to the Higher Education Commission.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You copied!

HON. J. USAMATE.- It actually came into place in 2010....

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. J. USAMATE.- ....and I remember that I was part of the people that were discussing the establishment of the Higher Education Commission...

MADAM SPEAKER.- Thank you for that.

HON. J. USAMATE.- There was no Parliament at that time.

MADAM SPEAKER.- That is not a point of order, that is clarification.

MADAM SPEAKER.- Honourable Nawaikula, you may continue.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- They copycat!

(Laughter)

The other reason, Madam Speaker, is that, this had gone through a Committee and it has not been debated. The contents of this has not been debated and here we are going through the third reading.

If you look at the recommendation of the Committee very clearly they said: "The Committee further requested the FHEC to consult all other stakeholders on the proposed Amendment Bill and conduct awareness to all stakeholders before this."

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, once the Bill is passed, but that is....

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Once the Bill is passed.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is what they say here.

You need to do that one of the reasons is that, you do not have enough money. Once the Bill is passed it is too late. That is why this is different, so need time, go back, consult other stakeholders and come back, and this is the reason to defer this.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Salote Radrodro?

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

The Committee had submitted its report on this Bill and as alluded by Honourable Nawaikula, the main recommendation was to take the Bill out again for further consultation.

Also, one of the pertained issues that was raised by the presenters was the need for more resources to be allocated to the Higher Education Commission so that they can effectively and efficiently carry out their role. And that is why that recommendation is being put in the report and in my view, that was to be undertaken first before the Bill is brought into the House for debate and for voting.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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

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

Marijuana may not be legalised now but obviously some people are partaking in it already, the quality of content from the other side.

Madam Chairperson, as it has been highlighted, essentially what this amendment does is to expand the scope of the Higher Education Commission and it will obviously be able to certify all these various institutions that are being set-up.

Madam Chairperson, of course, for example, the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) will only now allow for the withdrawal of funds for educational purposes. If the funds are going to be used to pay fees for institutions that have been certified by the Higher Education Commission.

We have heard numerous stories previously where funds were withdrawn by members, they were hard earned funds from the FNPF and people used to withdrawn that for their children and the children would go, for example, to these 'fly by night' institutions, catering schools, et cetera, do a three-month course or six-month course, and lo and behold at the end of it, the certificate has no standing, it is not recognised. So all that money has gone to waste.

This is why it is critically important that the expansion of the scope of the works of the Higher Education Commission is augmented so then they can actually go and certify all these difference institution that are not necessarily universities but other forms of post-secondary education.

Madam Chairperson, this essentially what this amendment Bill does and I hope that all Honourable Members of Parliament will support amendment. People may have different views about the supposed performance or non-performance or improvement of the performance of the Higher Education Commission but nonetheless, the Higher Education Commission does need these powers to be able go off and certify these institutions that are coming into play within the education market, education sector, the different modes of teaching, etcetera. They all need to be certify to be able to give not just these institutions a tick, but also to ensure that our ordinary men and women of this country, ordinary Fijians, are able to know that any education institution that is certified, actually is based on merit and that the qualifications that they will gain from these institution will actually be recognised. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Parliamentary will now vote.

Question put.

The question is:

That the Higher Education (Amendment) Act 2017, Bill no. 2 of 2016, be read a third time and do pass.

Does any member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of "ayes" and "noes")

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	- 27
Noes	- 14
Not Voted	- 9

Motion agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, read a third time and passed.

[A Bill for an Act to amend the Higher Education Promulgation Act 2008, Bill No. 2 of 2016, enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. (Act No. .... of 2017)]

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

**DEBATE ON THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL BILL, 2017**

In Committee:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any Member would like to speak on Bill?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, even before Clause 1, I would like to look at the Clauses which is at the front of the Bill.

We would like to seek an amendment in the Clause that is titled 15. It says; "Protection of animals in research, but to add the word "persons and" to include that. Thus, the recommendation of the Committee is to include the word "persons and". So we would like to make that amendment, Madam Chairperson.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chairperson, I second the motion

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anyone would like speak on this amendment?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being none, does anyone oppose the amendment?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no Opposition, the amendment is agreed to.

Question on amendment put.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 1

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments on Clause 1. Anyone?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, we seek an amendment to Clause 1 which is to substitute "2016" with "2017" to read; "This Act may be cited as the National Research Council Act 2017".

The second amendment is in Clause 1(2), to substitute the word 'the' word "a". So the sentence will now read; "This Act comes into force on a date or dates appointed by the Minister by notice in the Gazette."

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chairperson, I second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anyone want to speak on that motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being none. Does anyone oppose the amendment?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no Opposition, the amendment is agreed to.

Clause 1 as amended agreed to.

Clause 2

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does any Member want to speak on Clause 2?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no amendments to Clause 2, this Clause is agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Clause 3

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does any Member want to speak on this Clause ?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There are no more amendments to Clause 3, this Clause is agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does any Member propose for an amendment ?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There are no more amendments to Clause 4, this Clause is agreed to.

Clause 4 agreed to.

Clause 5

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does any Member propose an amendment to this Clause?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Madam Chairperson. As again approved by Parliament and under the Revised Laws Edition, the Consolidated Laws of Fiji, we no longer have Caps. The laws are now referred by the year in which the law was passed. So, we seek an amendment to Clause 5(3) to replace the words "Cap. 7" with "1967".

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chairperson, I second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anyone want to speak on that amendment?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being none, the amendment is agreed to.

Clause 5 as amended agreed to.

Clause 6

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on to the next Clause, Clause 6. Are there any amendments?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, I seek a clarification first before I move an amendment. I noticed that Clause 6 is itemised and in (e) it says; “such other persons...” Then in Clause 10 requires the quorum to be seven members. It just appears odd to me in the sense that there is no limit. So, one minister could come and appoint 13, the other could appoint 20 and I am just wondering whether we need to put a limit to to say, seven or eight if the quorum is seven, how many members do you want to have? So, is not very clear. I just want to seek clarification there before I move a motion to say instead of such seven or eight other members.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Attorney General would you like to clarify?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, the way that the law is drafted, it is obviously open to the minister who must, for example, as the Honourable Member highlighted, the Chairperson is appointed by the minister, PS responsible for Strategic Planning, the PS responsible for Education, then three persons who are engaged in research, including academic research to be appointed by the minister, and such other persons to be appoint by the minister, each representing an institution designated by the minister by notice in the gazette. So, they need to represent institutions and one would assume that the institutions, when we refer to institution, Madam Chair, if you see that there is no definition of institution per se, but the fact of the matter is that they would be representing institutions or organisations. So, as far as the Honourable Member is correct, that there is no limitation in respect of the numbers and the quorum, where is that explained?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Section 10.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, is not in that section but it says over here that the councils meet twice annually, seven members must constitute a quorum.

At the moment, Madam Chair, there is no limitation and that is the way it is drafted because we want to not necessarily limit it because there could be new institutions coming into play, there could be, for example, research institution or other institutions that are coming from the agriculture sector, et cetera, but a minimum of seven is required.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any other comments?

Since there are none, Clause 7 is agreed to.

Clauses 7 agreed to.

Clause 8

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, again one clarification and then amendment. In Clause 8(b) it says; “promote the development of a national intellectual database...” I think the intention was “intellectual property database”. Intellectual database does not make a lot of sense.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Intellectual knowledge.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Knowledge what? Maybe, I think it was meant intellectual property database. I mean, I seek clarification there.

The other clarification I want is probably to form a basis for a vibrant knowledgeable economy. I mean, it could be knowledge economy. I think it should be “knowledge economy” instead of “knowledgeable economy”.

I do not know but when I read it, it does not read very well. I mean, if someone is knowledgeable about something, “knowledge economy” is the appropriate terms. So, I was going to move an amendment to change it from “knowledgeable” to “knowledge”, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Attorney-General, would you like to clarify?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Minister for Education, do you want to make any comment?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister for Education?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Chair, on the first part that the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad had mentioned, just like we have a university electronic database, so what we are talking about is, intellectual database. The term “intellectual database” is broad enough to capture all kinds of database. In universities when we talk about electronic database, we talk about electronic journals, electronic periodicals, electronic statistical database. So, in here, we have broaden it to say that intellectual database so that it captures all kinds of knowledge database, whether it is in hard copy, whether it is statistical database or electrical or periodical, et cetera. So, there is no issue with that.

Now, Madam Chair, where the second part, Honourable Professor Biman Prasad is mentioning, I think he is originating his argument from the terminology that we normally use “a knowledge based society”. In here, we are talking about contributing towards a knowledgeable economy. So, I do not see any problem with that, Madam Chair.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, I am sorry, I beg to differ with the Honourable Minister. When I read through the whole Bill and the Committee, it is about research. Intellectual database? I think it is “intellectual property database” because the objective of the Bill is sort of also trying to look at whose property will be research. I mean, if someone comes up with a discovery...

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- (Inaudible)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, no, intellectual property it comes out from research. If someone discovers something, like scientific. So, I am not sure whether, intellectual database is too broad, it does not make sense. And “knowledgeable economy”, Madam Chair, I think is a wrong term used here, it should be “knowledge economy”.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, would you like to propose an amendment?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I will propose an amendment.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, can I response to that?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes..

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Professor Prasad, by putting intellectual property, you are actually limiting it. Intellectual property, as Honourable Bulitavu and Honourable Nawaikula, will tell you, for example, we talk about intellectual property and there is a whole lot of legal ramifications in respect of that. Property, intellectual property rights are held, what they call IP. Those rights are actually held by someone.

The whole basis of this Research Council is to foster research in Fiji. Madam Chair, in Fiji at the moment, there is no centralised collation of the intellectual input from the different institutions. There is no centralised agency. Unfortunately, this is probably something that should have been done long time ago, many jurisdiction actually have centralised research institutions by centralised research centres.

We obviously have a much smaller jurisdiction so the way it has been drafted is obviously to have it as wide as possible, as opposed to trying to limit it. This is, of course, an evolving institution that we are creating. Once the institution is actually created, your members will be constituted, the minister will appoint them, they will evolve with the times. There may be a need subsequently to be able to make some amendments which should not, Madam Chair, limit the scope of this Research Council from day one. We need to have this wide as possible. For example, in the way that we talk about intellectual property, we also talk about, for example, the rights to pertaining to indigenous areas to do trademarks, to even do with patents, all of that is very, very wide. All of that we need to include in this.

There are various areas that, at the moment, existed is not collated at all. This is why it has been drafted very widely, and to form the basis of a vibrant and knowledgeable economy. The Honourable Minister for Education said, we will talk generally provide a knowledge based society or knowledge based economy, but if you say “knowledge based economy”, there is absolutely nothing wrong with saying “knowledgeable economy”.

A knowledgeable economy is nothing wrong with it per se. I do not think you will, in any way, change the scope of the Council, all we are saying at the moment, Madam Chair, is that the intellectual database has been left very wide and to form a basis of vibrant and knowledgeable economy. It is an economy that actually is not just about individuals itself, but the economy is treated as an entity in itself.

So, economy in terms of how it interacts, the robustness of it, where all the players within the economy are centred around decision making processes, are centred around institutions that actually has a higher level of knowledge. Thus, essentially why we kept it so wide and, in fact, the scope is quite wide.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have any other comments? Are you still making your amendment, Honourable Professor Biman Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on to Clause 9, Clause 10, Clause 11, Clause 12, Clause 13, Clause 14.

Clauses 9-14 agreed to.

Clause 15:

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Attorney-General; would you like to speak on your amendment?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, thank you very much. We would like to have an amendment to the heading of this particular clause and to add the words “person and” after the word ‘of’ and in between animals. So it should read “protection of persons and animals in research”. And again in the clause itself, Madam Chairperson, after the words “safety of” insert ‘persons and’. So it should read “safety of persons and animals” and after the word ‘animals’ to insert a comma before the words “and to prevent”. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Do we have seconder?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chairperson, I second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anyone would want to speak on that amendment? There being none, are we all in the agreement of the amendment?

(Chorus of “ayes”)

Thank you. The amendment is passed.

Clause 15, with amendments, agreed to.

Clause 16:

Honourable Professor Biman Prasad you have the floor.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, I would like to make an amendment or add an amendment.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Please can you fill in the form?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else have an amendment, probably add to this one? Thank you, Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, would you like to speak on your amendment?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, the addition is just towards the end of the whole clause and includes those who do not engage in bio-piracy, I think it is bio-piracy.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Bio-piracy?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Just adding that to Clause 16 after “or any natural heritage or resource or anyone who does not engage in bio-piracy”.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You are stopping at bio-piracy, but there is an extension to that; would you like to read the whole amendment?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Therefore this clause will say “ A researcher must exercise all due diligence and take reasonable steps to ensure that the research does not harm the environment

and must not carry out any research that can adversely affect the environment or any natural heritage or resource and ....” (this is the amendment) ... “does not engage in bio-piracy in anyway shape or form. Do we have a seconder to this amendment?

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Chairperson, I second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Would you like to speak on your amendment to support the amendment?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I just wanted the Honourable Attorney-General to give his view on that, because I think that is intended to go up a bit further and protect those who might engage in bio-piracy so that is a common problem for a lot of researchers in many developments, especially those who engage in those sort of research. So it is a standard addition to the clause on protection, environment, natural resource, heritage and research.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Can I invite comments on these amendments?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, can I just ask Honourable Professor Biman Prasad to elaborate on what is bio-piracy?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Basically, Madam Chairperson, when you talk about bio-piracy you look at researchers, genetic resources, biodiversity and sometimes if you are not careful, if you do not have laws to protect that, then they could engage in any form of bio-piracy and take away the resource and the knowledge that might exist there. So I think it just a normal protection.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, I was trying to get Honourable Professor Biman Prasad to give us a practical example of it because the reason why I am getting Honourable Professor Biman Prasad to say that is because this particular clause is about ensuring the research that they carry out does not harm the environment and not carry out any research they can adversely affect the environment or any natural heritage or resource.

Say, for example they go out today and do some testing or some research for example in the mangrove swamp. If they are going do some research at the mangrove swamp, the chemicals they use for example must not harm the biodiversity, must not harm the environment. My understanding of bio-piracy is actually the theft. Piracy is actually the theft of, like taking any biodiversity elements within that particular ecosystem, but this clause is not for that. This clause is about harming it but what you are talking about is about theft. Piracy is essentially about theft or trying to replicate something that is not yours. In the same way, we talk about video pirating so you are trying to make a copy of something which you is not a licensed copy.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, I understand that, but I was thinking if we can add in that clause because I do not see that in anywhere else in terms of protection.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sure. Madam Chairperson, I do not think that clause actually belongs here. In any case, we have certain environment under the Environmental Management Act, there are various protections within that where you cannot for example, go off and steal various things from the environment for that particular ecosystem. So these people of course will be governed by that. All these councils will be governed by various other laws in the same way as theft, piracy,

trademarks, patents, et cetera, even intellectual property rights are not governed by Intellectual Property Act. But this is specifically about their research so when they go out and do their research, they must not harm the environment or the natural heritage that exist. So that is why it is specifically for that.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- As long it is protected in the other...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You know it is, it is.

HON. PROF. B. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson, then I withdraw.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. That amendment is withdrawn. Thank you, we look at Clause 16.

Clauses 16-22 agreed to.

Clause 23:

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Just a clarification on Clause 23. Clause 23 really provides for the procedures for accessing research grant. I am just wondering whether those procedural matters should be left to the Council, or should be within the legislation because the council may want to change that as they go along. As you said before, we need to....

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- A matter to clarify. Madam Chairperson, if you look down at Clause 23 (2) these are the basic requirements and it does say, "the person" also by definition is not just a natural person, it also can be another institute and if you look at the definition of person in the definition clause means "a person who is a natural or legal person including a company association or body person or the corporate or un-incorporate". So they can make it under business a basic requirement but if you look at Clause 23(2)(e) "any other particulars as may be required by regulations". Generally, the regulations are made by the Honourable Minister, the actual Act to being approved and then "any other particulars as may be required by the Council" so obviously if the Councils are going to be giving out grants does certain fundamental requirements must be met at the very least which is the person's full name and residential address, the qualification held by the person as the case may be. Additional requirements can be up put by the council subsequently.

MADAM CHAIR.- Thank you.

Clauses 24, 25, 26 and 27 agreed to.

Clause 28:

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Clause 28 on non-discrimination. I think it captures most of the grounds for discrimination or non-discrimination because I think it is very fundamental in any research, the academic freedom, and I think we should add to that political beliefs as well, because you could end up with a situation where researchers have political beliefs as well and you do not want to end up discriminating any researcher just because he or she holds a different political belief. So I would recommend that we add political beliefs as well.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister for Education.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Chair, when a researcher undertakes a research, the research is based on a scientific methodology. Political belief is immaterial, political belief should not matter, should not be used to direct the research on a particular conclusion. So Madam Chair, it is totally redundant, I do not think we should add that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chair, if you look at the grounds of discrimination, whether directly or indirectly, the section has been borrowed directly from Section 26(3) of the Constitution, and if you could read from the basis of grounds of his or her race, culture, ethnic or social origin, colour, place of origin, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression birth, primary language, economic, social or health status, HIV/AIDS which we have inserted specifically which is not actually in the Constitution specifically, disability, age, religion, conscience, conscience is also what you may have hold as your beliefs, could also include your political beliefs. So conscience is how you shape yourself. So it is captured there, also marital status or pregnancy.

Now in any case, with this law, because we believe that what Honourable Prasad is saying actually captures what you are trying to address, conscience actually captures that, but in any case, should there be some other reason for discrimination, this law, like all laws, are subservient to the Constitution and if a person can also seek Constitutional redress, notwithstanding the fact that these non-discrimination grounds are very, very wide and you would argue that conscience actually also means your political convictions too.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chair, that is much better explanation and understanding of what I was saying as opposed to the Honourable Minister for Education's blunt reply.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Chair, what Honourable Biman Prasad is trying to add here is to allow people to have a particular political belief or pegged to a particular political party ...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- (inaudible interjection)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- *Wawa!* No no!

... to make political comments without doing solid research, Madam Speaker.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- (inaudible)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- *Wawa,* that is irrelevant because there are people holding high positions in certain institutions, making comments without doing research, Madam Chair.

MADAM CHAIR.- Now that there is no amendment to Clause 28, the clause is agreed to unanimously.

Clause 28 agreed to.

And that brings us to the end of Committee of the whole Parliament. Parliament will now resume its sitting and I shall now resume the Chair.

The Parliament resumed:

The Committee of the Whole Parliament has agreed to the National Research Council Act 2017, Bill No. 5 of 2016.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I move:

That the National Research Council Act 2017 be read a third time and be passed.

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

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, research is critical for the growth and development of any country. It allows for the examination, the relevance of the existing bodies of knowledge, as well as the development of new bodies of knowledge. Without doing this, societies and countries will remain stagnant, many would argue, many people in Fiji have also remained stagnant for a long period of time.

In conducting research, Madam Speaker, countries can come up with solutions to problems, better and efficient ways of doing things, reduction of cost, increased profits, improvement of general standard of living of the country. We have two academics, Honourable Prasad and Honourable Reddy, who have worked in various tertiary institutions and they would, I am sure, vouch for the fact that research is very critical to push the boundaries of knowledge, to burst the boundaries of new ways of thinking, making paradigm shifts very very critical.

It is also very critical for economy in respect of, for example, agriculture. I am sure the Minister for Agriculture would also agree, and I am sure the Honourable Prime Minister, who is also Minister for Sugar will also agree that if we had new forms of research in the agricultural products, sugar and various other areas would be able to also increase our level of productivity, and also the outputs in the agricultural sector.

Of course, Madam Speaker, research is very, very limited; limitation in small countries which are often resource constrained is a general lack of appreciation of research and developments. The pre-requisite in attaining these must be the existence of a culture of research and development, nurtured by a relevant educational system that places signs, inclusive of social science technology and innovation and its core.

The Bill seeks to, Madam Speaker, amongst other things establish the National Research Council and to regulate the operations of the National Research Fund. By doing so, the Bill intends to raise the standards and development research, including development of scientific, health, educational, heritage, industrial, technological, social and economic areas. That would also add, Madam Speaker, in this respect also in the ICT sector. I just need to remind Honourable Members of this House, the *M-Paisa* that we use today, the programme was in fact written by a young man from Vanua Levu, who actually wrote the programme for *M-Paisa* that we are using today - Honourable Prasad's sister's son, Hussein.

What a wonderful achievement for a young person to be able to do that and there are many young people, Madam Speaker, who actually have the capacity to do so, and as the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister for Industry and Trade had highlighted some months back, last year in fact, but as announced in the budget, we are also looking at with the establishment of the new council for Small to Medium Enterprises, also had business incubation and research councils, with the ability to give grants to people who may have new ideas and to be able to encourage them is obviously the right step in the right direction.

So, Madam Speaker, we will of course provide the financial resource that is essential, that is essential to create this National Research Council. Consultations, Madam Speaker, was held with

the Ministry of Education, the Fiji National University, the University of the South Pacific, the University of Fiji, the Fiji Institute of Applied Science and the Koronivia Research Station. Madam Speaker, I will just very quickly highlight the salient features of the Bill. The Bill provides, of course, the Short Title, the State will be bound by the provision of the Bill as highlighted again in Part 2 as will be discussed and the people who can be appointed by the Minister to the Council.

Part 2 of the Bill provides for the powers and functions of the Council, as highlighted in clauses 8 and 9 of the Bill, which will be looked at in detail. It also compels the disclosure of interests by members of the Council.

Part 3 also provides protection to members of the Council, regarding confidentiality, et cetera.

Part 4 of the Bill provides for the Fund and how those funds can be ascertained and the moneys appropriated from the Consolidated Fund are authorised to be paid into the Fund by Parliament.

Part 4 of the Bill also enables a person to apply to the Council for the funding of the research, and as we discussed about the non-discriminatory nature of that and what basis it can be given also.

Madam Speaker, essentially Part 6 again talks about the unfair and discrimination that is not allowed by the Council.

Madam Speaker, this is a right step in the right direction. It is a long time coming and we will like this Bill to be of course passed and approval given by a bipartisan approval by the Parliament because we need to put this in place to encourage in particular, our academics, our people who are doing research and the potential researches and new people into this area, in particular in universities, et cetera, but also our young people, encourage them to be able to see research as a career path.

In many countries, people spend decades as being research people. We do not necessarily in Fiji at the moment if you say to your parents “I want to be a research person”, they will not necessarily see it as a real job, so we want to encourage and provide that new environment for our young people to be able to access funds to be able to inculcate that culture of innovation, technological innovation and also in the area of agriculture. So, I will recommend, Madam Speaker, that we support this Bill.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, the Bill is now open for debate, do you have any input?

There being no input, would you like to make concluding remarks, the Honourable Attorney-General?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

The question is that:

The National Research Council, Act 2017, Bill No. 5 of 2016, be read a third time and do pass.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill reported without amendments, read a third time and passed.

[A Bill for an Act to establish the National Research Council and to regulate the operations of the National Research Fund and related matters, Bill No. 5 of 2016, enacted by the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. (Act No. ....of 2017)]

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to our next Item in the Order Paper.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- A motion in the name of the Attorney-General, pursuant to Standing Order 130.

HON. SPEAKER.- Although not on the Order Paper, the Secretariat received notice of a motion for a referral of a Treaty and it was received well within the timelines stipulated under Standing Orders 46(2) and Standing Order 132.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing this motion to be tabled. Madam Speaker, I move:

That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence to review the Multilateral Convention to implement Tax Treaty and related measures to prevent base erosion and profit shifting.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Attorney-General has moved a motion to refer the tabled Treaty to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. I confirm the Attorney-General has provided me with a copy of the Treaty and written analysis as required by Standing Order 130(2), therefore pursuant to Standing Order 130(3), the Treaty and the analysis stand referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence for consideration and review. The Committee may table a report to Parliament no later than 30 days from today.

Honourable Members, I thank you so much for your patience. Thank you for your input to today's proceedings, being robust and has also been very healthy, thank you. Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.04 p.m.