

THURSDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 2016

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

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications; the Honourable Minister for Forests and the Honourable A.T. Vadei.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Wednesday, 28th September, 2016, 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. I also welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching proceedings on television and the internet and listening to the radio. Thank you for your interest in Parliament.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

Honourable Members, although not in our Order Paper, we received notification that the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament will table a Report on behalf of the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications.

I now call on the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament to have the floor.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications and in accordance with Standing Order 38(1), I present to Parliament the Fiji Meat Industry Board Annual Report of 2013.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Pursuant to Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Fiji Meat Industry Board Annual Report 2013 to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

Review Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence - Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Co-operation 2013 Annual Report

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the Review Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation 2013 Annual Report.

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence is a Standing Committee established under Section 109(2)(e) of the Standing Orders of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. The Committee is mandated to examine matters related to Fiji's relation with other countries, development aid, foreign direct investment, oversight of the Military and relations with multi-lateral organisations.

The purpose of the review was to scrutinise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation 2013 Annual Report, specifically on the area of administration, legislation, budget, organisation structure, functions, policies and programmes of the year.

Madam Speaker, the finding of the review and the recommendation put forward by the Committee are intended to assist the Ministry's service delivery in the future and especially in meeting Fiji's international obligations to the international laws, treaties and conventions and managing and maximising Fiji's foreign policy at regional and international diplomatic levels.

The review exercise was possible after a round of consultations with the Ministry. The Committee had identified areas of concern that need addressing to ensure the Ministry effectively achieves its goals.

I wish to extend my thanks to the Honourable Members and the Secretariat who were involved in the production of this bipartisan Report. My Committee colleagues are the:

1. Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca (Deputy Chair);
2. Honourable Mataiasi Niumataiwalu (Member); and
3. Honourable Jilila Kumar (Member).

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I commend this Report to Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion, without notice, that a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future date.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- The question is that the debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting. Does any Honourable Member oppose?

(Chorus of noes)

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

Motion agreed to unanimously.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Deputy Speaker, Honourable Ruveni Nadalo.

Report of the Privileges Committee on Breach of Privileges - Honourable Ratu I.D. Tikoca

HON. R.N. NADALO.- Madam Speaker, a matter of privilege was raised with the Honourable Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 134(1), initially on Wednesday, 6th July, 2016. There followed an exchange of correspondences which ended with the Honourable Speaker referring the matter to the Privileges Committee on Tuesday, 27th September, 2016 for consideration in accordance with Standing Order 127(2)(c). The Committee was requested to report back to Parliament during the sitting week at its earliest.

This Report differs from those of other Standing Committees in that, the proceedings were held in camera. Although consensus could not be reached, I nonetheless thank all Honourable Members of the Committee, which resulted in this Report.

I respectfully commend this Report to Parliament, pursuant to Standing Order 127(2)(d).

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- The Privileges Committee has reported back to Parliament, pursuant to Standing Order 127(2)(d).

Honourable Members, we will now suspend the proceedings to allow Members to read the Report on the Privileges Committee as I am allowing the Honourable Government Whip to move a suspension motion without notice pursuant to Standing Order (6)(2) to suspend Standing Order 46(2), in order to allow the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament to move a motion without notice. This will be done directly after Item 5 on today's Order Paper.

Thank you, Honourable Members, Parliament is now suspended.

The Parliament adjourned at 9.42 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 10.30 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members, you may be seated. We will now resume from where we left off in the Order Paper.

I now call upon the Chairperson of the Emoluments Committee, Honourable Dr. Brij Lal, to move his motion.

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON EMOLUMENTS

HON. DR. B. LAL.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to the Resolution of Parliament on Monday, 26th of September, 2016, I move that:

1. Parliament adopts the recommendations of the Special Committee on Emoluments tabled on Monday 26th September, 2016;
2. The recommended changes to Part B of the Schedule to the Parliamentary Remuneration Decree 2014, to be adopted as a determination pursuant to Section 3 of the Parliamentary Remuneration Decree 2014; and
3. This determination to take place with immediate effect and expires on 31st December, 2018.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Dr. Brij Lal to speak on his motion.

HON. DR. B. LAL.- Madam Speaker, the Special Committee on Emoluments was formed by a Resolution of Parliament on Friday, 8th July, 2016. The motion was seconded by a Member of the Opposition.

The Committee met on several occasions and looked at all the relevant Decrees and laws. It looked at all the previous Emoluments Committee Reports. It also looked at submissions given by the different parties and called for briefings from Pensions and Insurance and so forth.

After careful deliberations, the Committee agreed that there should be no increase in the salary, especially due to the effect of *Cyclone Winston* and people are recovering from it, but we recommended that we make slight adjustments to some of the allowances. There was a big list but we just agreed on six of them:

1. on the grounds;
2. on the role of Members;
3. the work of the Members of Parliament;
4. the extensive travel that is done by the Members;
5. long flights that they go through; and
6. the need for sufficient allowances to meet the expenses that are involved with it.

Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Members of the Committee for working with me and I recommend that we have this Report. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is open for debate. Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, let me, at the outset, say that we oppose this motion.

Firstly, allow me to give a background of what transpired in this Parliament since 6th July, 2015, that is, the day last year, Madam Speaker, when the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament moved the following motion which was passed and it was to this effect, and I quote:

“That in accordance with Standing Order 129, and in line with the provisions outlined in the Parliamentary Remunerations Decree 2014, that Parliament establishes an Emoluments Committee to investigate into and report upon the determination of remunerations for the President, Prime Minister, other Ministers and Assistant Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition, the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and Members of Parliament”.

Madam Speaker, the Emoluments Committee shall -

- (i) Commission an independent organisation to consider the appropriate level of remunerations for the President, Prime Minister, other Ministers and Assistant Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition, the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and Members of Parliament;
- (ii) Review the independent considerations and report back to Parliament with recommendations no later than Monday, 24th August, 2015; and
- (iii) the membership of the Emoluments Committee shall be -
 - (a) Honourable Jone Usamate;
 - (b) Honourable Veena Bhatnagar;
 - (c) Honourable Sanjit Patel (at that time);
 - (d) Honourable Roko Tupou Draunidalo; and
 - (e) Honourable Salote V. Radrodro.”

There was a recommendation that the Committee be given more time until February, 2016, but what happened to the work (if any) carried out by the Committee is unclear, except that it could not engage an independent organisation, to review emoluments of all Members of Parliament including office holders, Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, the Speaker and the President.

Madam Speaker, following the Business Committee meeting on 21st August, 2015, both the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and I had jointly written to your office, reiterating the need for the Committee to engage independent organisations or consultants to review emoluments. Now, Madam Speaker, without us fully knowing what work (if any) that Committee did and I know another Emoluments Committee was established on 8th July, 2016, comprising of Whips of all the three Parties and two other Members, we were surprised that contrary to the principles of transparency, the terms of reference, especially relating to the commissioning of an independent organisation was ignored this time around.

The National Federation Party’s Parliamentary Whip, Honourable Prem Singh, who was appointed a Member of the Committee on 8th July, wrote to the Committee Chairman, Madam Speaker, on 11th August, 2016 and thereafter did not attend any meetings of Committee. I will quote in full what Honourable Singh stated in his submission:

“We submit that it is morally and ethically wrong for Parliament to prescribe its own emoluments. Indeed the prescription of salaries and allowances for all Members of Parliament, inclusive of His Excellency the President, the Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Assistant Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition was not done in a transparent manner. These were prescribed through the Parliamentary Remunerations Decree 2014, Decree Number 29, promulgated by way of an extraordinary gazette on Friday 3rd October, 2014. The current FijiFirst Government Promulgated this Decree almost two weeks after it was sworn in as a democratically elected Government, following the 17th September, 2014 General Election.”

Madam Speaker, simply put, the current FijiFirst Government prescribed the emoluments for itself, determined the salaries of all others stated in the Decree, including Members of Parliament, and we believe that this was and remains totally against accountability and transparency.

What we thought, Madam Speaker, that this would be an opportunity, and this is why when the previous Committee was formed, we talked about an independent commission. We have no problems, this Decree was done before the Parliament, salaries were determined, but if you want to go back to it, whether its allowance or salaries, we need to go back to the principles of accountability and transparency and that is why we insist that an independent organisation, because otherwise as Members of Parliament, we will be accused of determining our own salaries and perks.

Historically, Madam Speaker, every Parliament in Fiji appointed an independent Emoluments Committee to determine salaries, perks and privileges of Parliamentarians. The last such Emoluments Committee was in 2003, and I believe that the Emoluments Committee should recommend for the establishment of independent consultants or independent group. They do not have to be accounting firms, they could be former Parliamentarians, citizens of this country who could look at what the Executive and Members of Parliament, including you, Madam Speaker, and the Deputy Speaker deserve.

The Report of the Independent Emolument Committee itself, Madam Speaker, will become an act of transparency and necessitate the repeal of the Remunerations Decree 2014 because if we change this Decree, there has to be a Bill to Parliament to change the Decree, and that would reset what we are saying in terms of transparency and accountability. And given the fact that the Parliamentary Remunerations Decree was promulgated after the FijiFirst Government was elected, this is an opportunity to get back, as I said before, to an accountable and independent process of determining the salaries and perks for us and the Executive.

Madam Speaker, there are obviously questions about disparities and relativities of salaries of the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Speaker. Let me, Madam Speaker, point at this time that I actually found it quite disappointing that in most Parliaments, the Leader of Opposition and the Speaker of Parliament would have perks with the salaries equivalent to senior Cabinet Ministers within that Parliament. Unfortunately that was not the case, so that is an example of the disparity and the lack of relativities in terms of determining perks and salaries.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, we will not be able to answer very well to the people of this country if we adopt this process because there are people questioning their own salaries, people are talking about minimum wages of \$2.32 and I think as legislators it is our responsibility (I believe) that we must adopt a very independent, transparent and open process to determine our own perks and salaries.

Madam Speaker, another issue is in the Decree itself which says that any determination made by Parliament will mean amendment to the Decree, as I said before. I have been told that it can be done outside the scope of the Decree but I am not sure about that and I actually remain unconvinced about that.

Section 9 of the Decree states that the Secretary-General to Parliament must publish the report in the gazette within 14 days of it being tabled here. The Secretary-General has to ensure that the report is publicly available 15 days after it is gazetted. We are obviously doing things in reverse here, Madam Speaker. We have been asked to approve the report and support the motion, that would mean increase in emoluments and then one month later, our citizens can have full access to the report. This, Madam Speaker, I think is not right.

I cannot emphasize more for the need to have an Emoluments Committee, and I think it will serve us well in the future if we have that, or an independent organisation to consider appropriate levels of remunerations and allowances. I do not think it is going to be a difficult process or difficult to get independent people to look at the whole issue and we could look at it next year in February once we have that report. And as I said, the last Independent Commission was in 2003, resulting in the Parliamentary Emoluments Report of 2003, that was 13 years ago so there is merit in having an independent process.

I have been told that it appears from the motion that the Government wants consensus. That is a good thing, we have been talking about consensus on many issues and I hope that this, itself, will be a beginning of more bipartisanship and consensus building in finding solutions to other issues before us. But, Madam Speaker, sadly many of those proposals that we put forward had been ignored by the Government in the past.

While I am speaking on this, Madam Speaker, one other point I want to speak on is the need for sufficient resources that commensurate with the work and part of the reason why this change in allowances might be recommended and I understand. I actually sympathise with Members of Parliament on both sides, especially the Backbenchers. They are handicapped by the kind of funding allocation to Parties, we do not allow them to do work that is commensurate with their responsibilities as Members of Parliament. Despite being a single national constituency, Members of Parliament still need to serve the people where they come from, where they probably got most votes from, where they reside, and these are responsibilities that come to them on a daily basis.

It was very disheartening that we started very well in 2014 when the Secretary-General independently decided the resources that should be allocated to the Parties, and Opposition parties and Government had been allocated staff and resources. But unfortunately after three months, in December, there was a sudden decision supposedly based on a letter by the Honourable Attorney-General to the Secretary-General that the formula needs to be changed of \$15,000 per Member. For us, Madam Speaker, as a small Party, we are operating out of our own office and all expenses are funded by us because of the fact that we have only \$45,000 through three Members. Now we do not even have \$45,000.

Madam Speaker, in most Parliaments parties have a minimum resource requirement, so you have a minimum resource requirement and then over and above that is based on the number of members each party has. So obviously we are not saying that FijiFirst should not get more, they should get more because they have more Members of Parliament. SODELPA Party should get more than us after we establish a minimum benchmark for every party to have resources and it was very very disheartening and still remains a sore point that we do not have adequate parliamentary resources as Members of Parliament, to do our work.

I think there are several issues, Madam Speaker, apart from the fact that we need an independent organisation/Committee to regularise and set in a process that we can all be satisfied with, and people of this country would be satisfied as Members of Parliament adopted the right approach, otherwise we will continue to go against the principles of transparency and accountability. I think it more seriously undermines the intent of the original motion of 6th July, 2015 where we agreed to have this.

Let me state this clearly, Madam Speaker, both Honourable Singh and I will not accept any increases in emoluments, even if they are approved by Parliament today. We will inform you both, you Madam Speaker and the Secretary-General.

With that the National Federation Party opposes the motion and this is in accordance with the decision of the Party's Management Board and for the reasons that I have stated.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The floor is still open for debate.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, in relation to this particular aspect, there have been a number of statements that have been made. I think one of the things that is important for us to realise is that, one of the most important offices in any land is the role that is undertaken by Members of Parliament, the role that they have in order to be able to fulfil their work of looking at legislations, determining the kinds of things that will drive the future of any country. That role is one of the most important roles that you can have in any country because by establishing laws and carrying out this legislative function, we are creating an environment in which a country can grow, and which it can also lead itself to ruin. So it is absolutely fundamentally important that we make sure that those who are participating in that role are able to be supplied with the kind of things that allow them to be able to carry out that role.

I have listened to the comments that were made by Honourable Professor Biman Prasad and I have been a member of both of these Emoluments Committee. I was a member of the first Committee and I was a member of the second Committee and I understand the sentiments that have been explained, it does not augur well for parliamentarians to be looking at the issues that will benefit themselves. I agree with that particular principle. That has been a principle that we also tried to apply in the initial Emoluments Committee. We called for organisations to come and to provide their services. Unfortunately, they did not come and at the same time, we know that the Members of Parliament were still being faced with the difficulties that they had.

We have had some horror stories in Parliament, of ordinary Members of Parliament (not including me as a Minister) finding it very difficult to be able to attend Parliament to find accommodation that is conducive to the kind of work that they do, to be able to provide food for themselves, so all these are the difficulties that they have. And if Parliamentarians are faced with those kind of issues, it is going to have to an impact on the level of performance that they provide in the House. So it is necessary for us to be able to take action on this and I believe that the calling of the Emoluments Committee and the action that they have just taken is completely in line with what we have in the Remunerations Decree.

Ideally, in an ideal world, we would get an independent party to come but in this particular instance, the Emolument Committee has decided that it will not look at the remuneration, but it must take into consideration those aspects of allowances that have an impact on the livelihood and the how well the Parliamentarians themselves can carry out their roles. That is what we are looking at today.

This Emoluments Committee and its suggestions is probably something people will not like it politically because it has an impact on how people reflect on Members of this House, but it is something that needs to be done because it is has an impact on the ability of Parliamentarians to fully engage themselves in the process to which they are called in this House.

On those lines, Madam Speaker, I endorse the recommendations of the Emoluments Committee.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other input, I will now invite the Chair to speak in reply.

HON. DR. B. LAL.- Madam Speaker, the previous Emoluments Committee that was formed was disbanded and we came in, this is the second Committee, and we have taken very careful consideration of all the issues that have been raised. We did not look at any rise in salaries or the pay, but we considered some of the urgent allowances that are relevant. So that is what we have recommended. Thank you.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote. The question is:

1. That Parliament adopts the recommendations of the Special Committee on Emoluments tabled on Monday 26th September, 2016;
2. The recommended changes to Part B of the Schedule to the Parliamentary Remunerations Decree 2014 to be adopted as a determination, pursuant to Section 3 of the Parliamentary Remunerations Decree 2014; and
3. This determination to take immediate effect and expire on 31st December, 2018.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	39
Noes	-	2
Not Voted	-	9

Motion agreed to.

The next item on the Agenda, I now call upon the Government Whip, the Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar to move his motion.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 6, I beg to move:

That so much of Standing Order 46...

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I wish to raise a point of order in relation to this matter. This point of order will raise issue on the convening of this Committee, as well as procedure. By procedure, I mean the fact that this motion has come here without notice.

I am mindful, in raising this point of order, of the fact that you, Madam Speaker, have made a ruling initially that once a motion goes to the floor, nothing can happen. I am also mindful of the seriousness of this motion and by this motion, we are asking that a Member be suspended for the rest of

the term of Parliament and that he not be allowed into Parliament. That is very very serious so it is understandable that I am raising this.

The motion is made under Standing Order 74(6).

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- A Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am still on this, I am citing the Standing Order now.

HON. SPEAKER.- I will deal with each point of order separately.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- The Point of Order that I wish to raise is, the motion is for the suspension.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I am on a of Point of Order.

HON. SPEAKER.- On this Point of Order? Is it a clarification on the Point of Order?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Point of Order that I am citing is Standing Order 74(4) and if you will allow me to read that, it says and I quote:

“The Speaker’s decision on the point of order is not open to appeal and may not be considered by Parliament, except on the substantive motion with notice.”

That is the reason why it has to come by notice and I am also saying here that it is not open to appeal.

I am asking you, Madam Speaker, to make a ruling that this motion is out of order, especially because it should come by way of notice and I am asking, in making your consideration on the ruling that you look at your letter that you wrote on 9th August, 2016, in which you said, “A ruling has been in relation to this.” And I am asking you also to look at the contents of that ruling that you made in this manner, so basically I am saying that there has been a ruling because there is a ruling

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- A Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Sorry, I will just get this Point of Order, Honourable Member.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Just a point of clarification, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member is actually now arguing the substantive motion, the motion that has not been moved yet. What I was moving was a suspension of the Standing Orders pursuant to Standing Order 6 to suspend so much of Standing Order 46, to allow a motion by the Leader of Government in Parliament to be moved. That is the substantive motion that the Honourable Member is now arguing. That is what he will do once the process is done.

This is the just a suspension of the Standing Orders, it is just a re-organisation of the Order Paper but once that is done, it will be open for the Honourable Member to argue the substantive motion.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, because that is part of the motion and I am trying to stop it.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- This is a suspension of the motion, not the suspension of the Member. The motion that I am moving is the suspension of the Standing Orders to allow

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Suspension so that you can move that motion.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Yes, when that motion is put to the floor, then you can argue that part.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Government Whip, you are quite right in what you have said. The motion is really on suspension of the

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Very well, then I will have another bite of the cherry then.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, please continue.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, let me re-state the motion.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 6, I beg to move:

That so much of Standing Order 46(2) be suspended to allow the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move his motion without notice.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Now I call upon the Government Whip to speak on his motion.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, this is just a procedural motion as the Order Paper in Standing Orders 46(2) requires that there be a notice of, at least, two days before any motion is moved. This is a procedural motion which is moved by myself to suspend that part of Standing Order 46(2) to allow the Leader of Government in Parliament to move his motion without notice. In fact, for the benefit of Honourable Nawaikula, after moving that motion, he will be arguing that. That is all I have to say in respect of my motion to suspend Standing Order 46(2).

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, you have heard the motion moved for the suspension of the Standing Orders, we will now debate on that suspension before we debate on the motion. Parliament is now open for debate on this particular motion - the suspension of the Standing Order.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I wish to take this opportunity to clarify myself in relation to that because the motion here is for the suspension and my Point of Order also relates to that because it is relating to the procedure. I am asking the Madam Speaker to rule on that, you cannot even bring this motion, so you cannot even ask for that suspension order. But in any event, we will hear this out and I will come in after.

HON. SPEAKER.- We are debating on this particular motion and you are given time to debate. Is there any other input to the debate?

There being no other input to that debate, Parliament will vote on this suspension motion.

Question put.

Pursuant to Standing Order 6, the question is that, so much of Standing Order 46(2) is suspended to allow the Leader of Government in Parliament to move his motion without notice. Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	29
Noes	-	13
Not voted	-	8

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the next item on the Agenda and I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move his motion.

BREACH OF PRIVILEGES – HONOURABLE RATU I.D. TIKOCA

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, having received the report of the Privileges Committee, I move:

That pursuant to Standing Order 47 that Parliament endorses the findings of the Privileges Committee that -

- 1) The Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca has contravened Standing Order 62(4)(a) and (d) in circumstances that were grave and the serious breach of privilege;
- 2) The Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca issue a public apology;
- 3) That the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca must be suspended for the remainder of the term of Parliament with immediate effect;
- 4) That during the period of suspension, the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca is not allowed to enter the Parliamentary precincts, including the Opposition Office. Immediately upon Honourable Isoa Tikoca suspension, he must be ordered to leave the Parliamentary precincts and to remain outside of Parliament precincts; and
- 5) That if the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca fails to comply with any of the above, the necessary enforcement measures must be imposed to ensure compliance.

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can I raise my Point of Order now?

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can I raise my Point of Order now?

HON. MEMBER.- No, second the motion.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, because once the motion is seconded, it is on the floor. I am trying to stop that.

HON. SPEAKER.- What is your Point of Order? Is that a Point of Order?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes. My Point of Order is that, I do not want this to go to the floor because I am mindful of Madam Speaker's ruling that once it is on the floor, it is beyond her hands. So, before I second it and put it to the floor, I am raising this Point of Order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, but the motion is already on the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, it has to be seconded before it goes to the floor and that is why I am standing now before he stands up to second it because once it is on the floor I am out.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Speaker can only make a ruling before any matter is brought into the Parliament Chamber.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I will make my Point of Order, anyway.

HON. SPEAKER.- My ruling is that we will continue. I cannot make a ruling on your Point of Order because the issue is already now in Parliament.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Allow me to disagree with you, Madam Speaker, if I have to read the contents of this.

HON. SPEAKER.- Sorry, you will not be able to disagree with what I have said because what I have said is really based on the Standing Orders and the powers that are.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This is a Standing Order.

HON. SPEAKER.- That particular ruling should have been brought to me outside of Parliament. Once it is in Parliament, it is the Members of Parliament that make a decision.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Could you allow me to read this?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, please, I need to continue with this and I do not want to be given authority that I really do not have.

Therefore, now that you have second the motion, I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to speak on his motion.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, before that happens, may I move a Point of Order again, not on this but a different one – not on Standing Order 76?

HON. SPEAKER.- Is it on the issue at hand?.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- On the issue at hand. The Point of Order is raised under Standing Order 18 and if you allow me to read that.

HON. MEMBER.- It is part of the debate.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is not part of the debate because I am asking for a ruling.

Madam Speaker, Standing Order 18 says, you have the plenary power to:

- a) For ensuring that the rights and privileges of all members are protected.

So you can make the ruling here.

This matter affects the rights, in fact, the human rights of a Member to be in Parliament. So, I am asking that in relation to that, that you ask for advice whether this can proceed and whether this could be the appropriate manner to proceed with this and in coming to your ruling, I am asking you to seek independent legal advice and the advice of your peers from other Parliaments.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The matter of privilege goes through a process. The process is, that a matter of privilege is raised with the Speaker and these had been raised with the Speaker and I had referred this matter of privilege to the Privileges Committee, and that was the process that has been undertaken.

We are now on the report of the Privileges Committee and the matter is now before the House for debate. I do not have any other authority to go against that ruling, but thank you for that Point of Order.

I will now call the Honourable Leader of Government to speak on his motion.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, as directed by your good office, the Privileges Committee has reported on the matter of privilege raised by the Honourable Prime Minister regarding the statements made by the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca in Parliament on Tuesday, 5th July, 2016 in relation to the 2016-2017 National Budget debate.

Madam Speaker, again, it is quite unfortunate that the Honourable Members on the other side still do not seem to take the matter of privilege and the Standing Orders as seriously as we do.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- It is a shame.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- It is a shame that we keep bringing motions in this House against Honourable Members who cannot seem to understand that with freedom comes responsibility.

Madam Speaker, I have said so in the past that there is a need to strengthen the instrument of Parliament and takes serious measures to protect the dignity and supremacy of legislature. For this reason, Madam Speaker, matters of offensive conduct towards Parliament must be treated seriously.

It is even more important, Madam Speaker, that Parliament upholds the required standard of behaviour in Parliament, in particular the prohibition against speaking words that are likely to promote or provoke feelings of ill-will or hostility between communities or ethnic groups within Fiji.

Madam Speaker, the Privileges Committee has found the comments made by the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca to contravene Standing Order 62(4)(a) and (d) and in circumstances that were grave and a serious breach of privilege. It is not the example that we want to set as a standard of behaviour for Members of Parliament nor is it the standard of behaviour that the Fijian population should receive from each elected Member of Parliament and such conduct and statements undermine Parliament. It undermines the Constitution and it undermines democracy. Therefore, we must take proper action to protect our parliamentary democracy and the interests of all Fijians.

It is also critical, Madam Speaker, that our children and younger population are not exposed to this type of divisive behaviour and ethnic stereotyping. If Parliament accepts this behaviour from an Honourable Member of Parliament, it will be condoning such conduct. This sort of behaviour is not acceptable in Fiji today and should not be accepted in this Honourable House.

Madam Speaker, the words by Honourable Ratu Tikoca in his statement to Parliament are designed to promote or provoke feelings of ill-will or hostility between the communities or ethnic groups within Fiji. It is apparent that through his words and the persons he has singled out, Honourable Ratu Tikoca is attacking Fijians who are Muslims or who follow Islam as their religion.

Madam Speaker, this is not the kind of language or statements the Fijians expect to hear by the so-called leaders who have been elected into Parliament. Perhaps, using religion and ethnicity to divide our people is an approach that is used by Members of the Opposition, this is precisely why they are there as oppositions. They seem to be opposed to moving Fiji forward where we no longer use race, religion, ethnicity, gender or ability to divide us, we are all Fijians and in our diversity lies our strength.

There is no need to play the race card or the faith card or as in this case, Madam Speaker, both cards. We must have substantive and robust debates on economic, social and political issues but not on what religion or what race someone is from and what is the point of that, Madam Speaker.

The Standing Orders were designed to ensure that no Member of Parliament uses offensive words against Parliament or another Member or words that are likely to promote or provoke feelings of ill-will or hostility between communities of ethnic groups in Fiji. Madam Speaker, Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca's words are likely to promote or provoke feelings of ill-will or hostility between communities or ethnic groups in Fiji, and it is not an acceptable standard of behaviour.

It is unbecoming of a Member of Parliament to utter such stereotypically charged words and this is why we must yet against certain example of the kind of behaviour that will not be tolerated in this House. We will not let Honourable Members cast aspersions on a particular community or a group of people. We are all Fijians and we have the same rights and responsibilities. We are not the same but we are all equal.

For this reason, Madam Speaker, and in accordance with the recommendations made by the Privileges Committee, I make this motion that the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca be disciplined for his conduct.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The motion is now open for debate. Honourable Faiyaz Koya.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to take the floor with respect to this particular motion and I show my support to the report and outcomes out of the Privileges Committee on the racist statements made by the Honourable Ratu Tikoca in Parliament in July.

Madam Speaker, this side of the House stands for equality. We stand for equality....

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Point of Order!

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, can all the speakers who may speak today refer to the paragraph where I mentioned "Islam or Muslim" in the text that I read? To me, it is an assumption, but I never mentioned that. Please, when you said that, like the previous speaker, can you quote the paragraph?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Members, you have 20 minutes of debate and you are free to say whatever you like within the 20 minutes. Honourable Minister, you may continue.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I am permitted to put whatever it is I want to in my speech, they can make comments afterwards.

Madam Speaker, as I said, this side of the House stands for equality and unity and most importantly, what must be remembered by this august House and everyone in Fiji is that the Civil Service appointments are based on merit and merit alone.

Madam Speaker this Government has tirelessly tried to root out racism and systemic inequalities in our society. Today, the people of Fiji have the freedom to practise any religion of their choosing without fear of prejudice or intimidation.

The Fijian Constitution enshrines the right to practice religion or to adhere to a belief system and also declares that all of us are Fijians, are united by common and equal citizenry. And I have to question, Madam Speaker, what does the Opposition side find so wrong with that? Why is it so difficult to comprehend the necessity of such provisions, given the diverse range of religious, faith, practice in this particular country? Why should all of us not be able to practise the religion of our choice, Madam Speaker, freely with the knowledge that it is a constitutional right to do so?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker. There was no mention at all there on religion. Irrelevant!

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Your comments on what has been said, you will be able to make it when you have your input to the debate. Meanwhile, let us hear out the Honourable Minister.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the derogatory comments and I say “derogatory comments” made by the Honourable Ratu Tikoca against the Honourable Attorney-General, questioning the position of many of our most dedicated public servants were totally out of line. Absolutely totally out of line and uncalled for!

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Attorney-General is a qualified and a learned man. He has worked extremely hard to build a culture of excellence, a culture of pride and a culture of commitment within the Civil Service, that has had major benefits for the advancement of this country, and that is the truth.

Madam Speaker, the same applies for everyone who was mentioned by the Honourable Ratu Tikoca in his tirade against some of the most qualified and capable Fijian men and women in the Fijian Government, Fijians who he claimed were undeserving of the responsibility entrusted to them. Every one of those men and women got where they are today on the basis of their achievement, on the basis of their qualifications and on the basis of their drive and their passion for the betterment of our country.

Madam Speaker Honourable Tikoca attacked Her Excellency Nazhat Shameem, amongst others. She is a graduate from Sussex and Cambridge University with a Master of Law and a Master of Philosophy in Criminology, a former Director of Public Prosecutions, a former Prosecutor for 10 years and Fiji’s first ever Indo-Fijian High Court Judge. So I have to ask, in what way is merit lacking? Madam Speaker, Honourable Ratu Tikoca’s claims were certainly news to me and news to anyone who has had the pleasure of working alongside Her Excellency.

Madam Speaker, he attacked the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Mr. Shaheen Ali, our Permanent Secretary. This gentleman has had 18 years of experience in trade policy and trade negotiations, industry and development, economic management, consumer protection, competition law and a wide array of other fields. He is a USP and a Monash graduate with a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in International Relations, International Economics and Trade, a man who has always put the interests of his country at the forefront and who has consistently stood firm for Fiji. So, Madam Speaker, where is the merit lacking? I will ask again; where is the merit lacking?

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on but there is also one clear example of an appointment that he referred to with respect to someone named Mr. Razim Buksh. His particular appointment was made by the SDL Government and at that time the Honourable Attorney-General then was Mr. Qoroniasi Bale. Madam Speaker, I clearly do not see where he is coming from.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on regarding all the other people that he mentioned, that I could detail the impressive resumes of all these dedicated public servants that the Honourable Ratu Tikoca questioned in his incoherent ranting, but frankly that would take all day because the reality is, every one of them comes from extremely strong background and that alone is the reason that they had been given the opportunity to work on behalf of this great nation.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Ratu Tikoca's statement is dirty, fear-mongering and are not new to Fiji. They reflect attitudes and prejudices that have marred our society for many years, but this Government is making it very clear that those tricks and blatant attempts to divide our people amongst racial lines and religious lines have no place in the new Fiji, Madam Speaker, and certainly have no place in this Parliament.

Madam Speaker, the dignity of this House and the dignity of the Fijian people must always be maintained and we need to send a strong message to our young people - the future of Fiji that if you work hard and if you apply yourself, you will achieve great things. That, you will go as far as your merit can take you and will carry you.

Madam Speaker, those who question your success, those who seek to attack you for your ethnicity or your religion are 100 percent wrong.

Madam Speaker, with those few words I must say this, we need to move Fiji forward. We do not want the dark era that we lived in previously, Madam Speaker, we need to move Fiji forward and that is why I support the outcome of the Privileges Committee.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, I stand in support of the motion before the House. We have already set a precedent in this House. We have sent two Honourable Members on suspension for utterances against this House and against the Standing Orders, Madam Speaker.

As a reasonable person, Madam Speaker, if we were to look at the three instances and the utterances that were made by the three Honourable Members and if we were to compare them, this would be the worst of the three that have been made.

Madam Speaker, there was an attack against Muslims. We can sit here and lie to ourselves that those statements were not an attack against Muslims. Honourable Ratu Tikoca is lying to himself. He may not have said the word, he may not have said 'Muslim', he may not have said 'Islam', but any person

reading those paragraphs which he made, will make that connection - any reasonable person would. So, we should really stop lying to ourselves and to the people of this country.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, Point of Order!

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- That is your assumption, your assumption is wrong. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, you may continue.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, we sit in a privileged position as Members of this Honourable House. We are Parliamentarians. For starters, we are all called 'Honourable', we are respected by the Fijian people. They voted for us to be here, they trusted us.

I agree with the statement made by Honourable Seruiratu, with privilege comes responsibility and the higher the privilege is the bigger the responsibility and that responsibility is on each and every shoulder in this Honourable House.

His Excellency the President, Major-General (Retired) Konrote just a week or so ago stated, and I quote:

“Let us all be worthy in public life of the ordinary men and women who have put us here, have given us their trust and to whom we owe our ultimate duty, our ultimate loyalty. It would therefore be very irresponsible of us if we were to allow ourselves to say whatever we wanted without paying any regard to the impact, our statement made on those who have put us here, the Fijian people.”

The FijiFirst Party has consistently spoken out and taken action against persons who thrive on promoting ill-will between ethnicities, between religious groups, et cetera, as a means of trying to make themselves more relevant in society, things that go against the rules we have set for ourselves in our Standing Orders.

Madam Speaker, we have a Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act. It makes ordinary Fijians liable to penalties, including imprisonment, if they are convicted of scandalous slander or libel on Parliament or on Members of Parliament. That is what we expect of our people, that is what we expect of every Fijian person. Should we as lawmakers not be subjected to higher standards? Should we not be subjected to higher benchmarks?

Madam Speaker, a great man also said in this very House about a year or so ago, asking us as Honourable Members of Parliament to put the honour back into honourable. I ask each Member in this House today to study the statement that Honourable Ratu Tikoca made that they are all here for on this motion; ask ourselves honestly; strip ourselves off our political differences, our biases and ask yourself as a reasonable person, where is the honour in that? Was there no evidence of ill-will towards a group of people in this country?

Madam Speaker, it is evident to me as a person, as an individual and as a Member of this House that the statements made by the Honourable Ratu Tikoca were a direct, veiled attack against Muslims of this country. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER. – Honourable Rosy Akbar.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I would like to quote from the Privileges Committee's Report that was handed to us this morning, there is actually no page given but I will read from here, just to refresh our memories and support the argument that Honourable Vuniwaqa had just made.

Madam Speaker, let me quote:

“Your statement made in Parliament on 5th July, 2016, which is the subject of matter of privilege before the Privileges Committee is as follows:

This is the letter hand delivered to Honourable Ratu Tikoca on the 28th September, 2016 and I quote:

“Fiji has recently adopted the title Minister of Economy. That is an appointment used in Arab countries, including South Arabia, United Arab Emirates and the Islamic State of Afghanistan.”

Madam Speaker, I move on to page 2 and I quote again:

“Honourable Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Economy has direct oversight over strategic sectors and the names that are mentioned there is Khan, Faiz Khan, Iqbal Janiff, Faiz Khan again, Riyaz Khaiyum, Zavier Khan, Riyaz Khaiyum again, Shaheen Ali, Feroz Hamaz Ali, Arif Ali, Rasim Buksh, Mohammed Saneem, Nizar Ali, Shameem Khan.”

Madam Speaker, I do not see any Pillay or Kumar or Prasad there nor do I see any Delana or Eden there, so what is the assumption there? All these names are Muslim names. Anyone can get to that.

Then, Madam Speaker, the statement again, I quote, “one man leading the nation with his kind”, what kind are we talking about? The Khan, the Ali, the Khaiyum and the Buksh all mentioned here? So it is obviously clear what the implications were. Anyone who can read that will understand, so let us stop lying to each other and let us get the facts straight. The references were made to the ...

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, Point of Order!

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- ...Muslim community. That is all I have to say, Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU. I.D. TIKOCA.- Lie has been directed to me. All these people who have been mentioned are Fijians. Are you not the ones who have promoted us to be Fijians? We are Fijians.

Secondly, I have never raised that as a

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- You are wasting your time.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No, let me talk to you, everyone under those names are Fijians. If you extract by the

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, it is a lie that you used that you directed to me when you do not even understand the context of the message that I was wanting to portray to stop instability to this nation. Please, Madam Speaker, she should withdraw the word “lie” that has been directed to me.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Akbar, withdraw the word “lie” and then carry on.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- I withdraw that remark. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I wish to move a motion under Standing Order 104. I am very concerned about the tone of the dialogue today, Madam Speaker, I think we are heading in a direction that is quite dangerous.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, you are contributing to the debate, you can put it in a motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to amend the motion under Standing Order 104.

HON. SPEAKER.- But the motion is now open for debate. Any amendment should have been done beforehand, so please just have an input to the debate and I will not accommodate any amendments at this time. It is not part of the process of debate. Now, we are in the process of debate, please.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- My understanding under Standing Order 104 is that, a Member can make an amendment to a motion at any time during the debate, Madam Chair.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA- He can do it.

HON. SPEAKER.- You are correct, sorry about that, so you can move your motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Chair, I move:

That the recommendation be reduced to 30 days suspension, and that the Honourable Ratu Tikoca makes an apology.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will now debate on that amendment. Parliament is now open for debate on the amendment.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Can I speak on the amendment, Madam Speaker?

HON. SPEAKER.- Yes, you can speak in reply but if there is no one else that will speak on the motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- No, I present my motion and I have a right of reply.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- He talks on his motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I talk on my motion, I have a right of reply.

HON. SPEAKER.- I was saying that I was giving opportunity for anyone else that would like to have an input. Now that there is no other input, then you may speak.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- No, Madam Speaker, I moved and I need to speak on my motion and then I have a right of reply - that is the way I understand it.

(Hon. Dr. Reddy interjects)

We also understand procedures, Honourable Member.

HON. SPEAKER.- We would like to first accept the amendment to the motion and that is what we are debating now. The amendment to that motion, it has been seconded.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, so can I speak on it now?

HON. SPEAKER.- Yes.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am just very concerned about the direction the dialogue is going. I think it behoves us, as leaders of this country, I was hoping that a community would not be named in this House, but it has now come out and we must think of our people. We are alright here, we are all mature people but think of all the people who are watching this, people who live side by side everyday. You may all live in cities, I live in my village, and my village is where people interact and we must not allow this dialogue to filter through to the ground level, to the villages. We must take stock of where we are today and tone down the dialogue, please. That is why I say, Madam Speaker, I was hoping that we would have had something on the side to address this because the kind of words we are hearing today, we are walking through a slippery slope and once you go in that direction, it is very hard to turn back.

I would urge everyone, please, just take stock of where we are, some of the words that are being used aimed at a community should not be used in this House. We should have had a way of addressing this because we also have issues with what has been said about our community but we do not want to bring it up here. We would rather that this is part of our evolution as a people. Certain words are wrong, we overcome it by educating our people on some of these issues and an apology from the Honourable Ratu Tikoca would go a long way in healing whatever has taken place. That is what we need – we need to heal.

What we are starting today, we as leaders should say, “Alright, we hold it back. We know where it is going to go, hold it back now, please.” This is why I am saying, tone it down and let us re-look at this thing so that a normal process of healing can take place.

What we are suggesting and the kind of words I am hearing now, I really am concerned. I was hoping that communities would not be mentioned because I can very easily bring up things about my community but where are we going to end up with? So, please, let us show responsibility that we are all mature people, we all mediate in wherever we are and it is time to mediate now, do not go this way, please. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Faiyaz Koya, you may have the floor.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, if I may, we, on this side of the House totally disagree with the motion to change and I think what needs to be realised here also is, this is a House where you can have some heated debate – absolutely have some heated debate. This is heated debate but it is well within the confines of the rules of debate, Madam Speaker. This side of the House always complies and stays within the confines of rules of debate in this particular House.

Madam Speaker, the matters being raised by the Honourable Member to say that we should be careful about we say, et cetera, may be that advice ought to have gone to his fellow colleague before he went off and said the things he did, Madam Speaker. It is not something that we need to be lectured about on this side of the House. This particular issue is so serious that it warrants the orders that had been asked for. The suggestions that have been made by the Privileges Committee, it warrants that. We are not, in this nation, going to tolerate any more nonsense with respect to racism. We cannot, we will not and we should not!

Madam Speaker, just for your information, this is what the new Fiji is. This Saturday in Vatukarasa Village in Nadroga, there is a celebration for *Eid* where there is going to be a sharing of food between the Muslim brothers and the village who have had a relationship for 150 years. That particular celebration is going to be attended by those who live in the village, those who live across the village and a couple of other villagers that have understood. That is the reality and that is the new Fiji, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said when we were debating the suspension of Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu that we, as legislators and as Members of Parliament, must respect the Parliamentary rules.

Madam Speaker, this country has always been a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country and despite periods of disharmony because of the *coups*, different groups, different interests and different organisations have had issues. Some suffered more than the others, but there was suffering after every *coup* and every *coup* led to some tensions.

I do not support any comments or attempt to ignite any kind of ethnic, religious or any other kind of ill-will. And we, Madam Speaker, in this country have lived for long side-by-side and every religious group in this country has contributed to the wellbeing of this country, including the Muslim community, every community and we must acknowledge that at all times. Even I do not even agree with the list that the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca put out. Iqbal Jannif, I know him from a long time, a wonderful man, a man who has contributed for years and I respect him.

But let me come back to the real issue and why I support the motion by the Honourable Gavoka. Madam Speaker, I agree with Honourable Koya that this House is supposed to be a house for robust, heated debate. This House is not a temple or a mosque or a church where we come down, bow down and go out. This is a temple of democracy, this is where we have perceptions, discussions and where we make comments sometimes. They are out of what the Standing Order requires, but Madam Speaker, it surprises me so much that sometimes the Honourable Members on the other side think they are the only ones who can take the high moral ground in this country. Let us be honest about this, Madam Speaker.

We need to restrain ourselves. If you look at laws, I mean, I am not a lawyer but even the most common law can be a most draconian piece of law, if those who have the power and have the majority apply that law without restraint and this is what happened, Madam Speaker, when we were looking at Ratu Lalabalavu's case and Honourable Tupou Draunidalo's case. You would know, Madam Speaker, yourself that the International Parliamentary Union has said very clearly that those suspensions were unwarranted, it was harsh. It was uncalled for. They have made their point.

What I want to say, Madam Speaker, is that you yourself are the referee of this temple of democracy. You make the rules. The Standing Orders is supposed to be the rules on which you apply, Madam Speaker, these standards.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, please do not bring the Speaker into the debate.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- That is a fact, Madam Speaker, because if you go back to when the conversation happened and the Deputy Speaker was in the Chair....

HON. SPEAKER.- Refrain from making reference to the Speaker.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Well, I am referring to the decision, the observations at the time when those comments were made. The observation of the Deputy Speaker who was in the Chair was that, he warned Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca that that kind of language should not be used. You, Madam Speaker, followed with a letter as well and there were other instances....

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- What is your Point of Order?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- It is just on relevance, we are talking, not on the substantive motion, we are talking on the amendment.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I am talking about the amendment, it is relevant.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- No, they are two different motions altogether, Madam Speaker.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I do not understand the Point of Order. I am talking on the amendment motion and I am making a point as to why the amendment motion by Honourable Gavoka is a reasonable motion, it is going to be a motion which will send a message to us all, to those outside, that we need to maintain certain standards in the House. But it is not going to solve this problem if we keep on suspending Members of Parliament in an unreasonable way and again, the amendment motion tries to say that the original motion is unreasonable.

(Honourable Dr. Reddy interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The Minister for Education, Madam Speaker, ought to learn that he needs to listen sometimes because as teachers, this is what we tell our students that when someone is speaking, you listen.

Madam Speaker, if we begin to apply laws in a blasphemic way, in other words, in a democracy, people do say things. That does not mean that he is going to create ill-will. There were things said in 1987, 2000 and during the struggle for independence, but this country has been a very peaceful country. Our people are peaceful and hardworking. It is not for this Government to suddenly come out and say, 'we have created a situation then suddenly there is no equality.' We had religious freedom in this country...

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Point of Order!

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, Standing Order 105, in that the speaker must be brief on the amendment to the punishment that has been dictated by the Committee. That is the restriction that is laid with the amendment to the motion.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, there is no restriction on motions.

HON. SPEAKER.- According to Standing Order 105(2), if directed by the Speaker, the mover of the amendment to the motion must put it in writing and pass it to the Speaker. I do have it in writing and we are now debating on that amendment.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, let me continue. I think the Honourable Members on the other side talk about lectures. I think they need to listen to others when they speak as well.

(Hon Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister.

Let me say this, Madam Speaker, there have been instances in this Parliament where there have been references to religion and ethnicity, and let me give you this example and then you will know whether you were there or not.

On 3rd June, the Government Whip, I think this was in the case of

HON. J. USAMATE.- Point of Order!

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- I think what we might be arguing about now is something we should not be arguing about because Standing Order 105(1) defines the manner in which you can amend the motion. It says that when amending the motion you can only leave out one or more words of the motion to insert one or more words ...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- She has already accepted.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hang on!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD. - She made a ruling.

HON. J. USAMATE.- ...in the motion, to add one or more words at the end of the motion, to leave out one or more words of the motion and insert one or more” It only says one or more words. I think the amendments that the Honourable Gavoka has said, he has not done that, he has come up with some whole new sentences. So we will be arguing about something that is totally contrary to what Standing Order 105 allows us to do.

HON. SPEAKER.- The amendments that I have before me is very simple, to reduce the period of suspension to 30 days. That is the amendment. We are now justifying that amendment and according to our rules, they are given 20 minutes to do that.

Anyway, all these interruption is included in your 20 minutes.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I appreciate that.

HON. SPEAKER.- You are speaking on the amendment?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The amendment is justified because as I said before....

HON. SPEAKER.- I am sorry, you can be speaking on the amendment and also on the substantive motion but when it comes to the vote, we will be voting first on the amendment and then on the substantive motion.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Because both are related, Madam Speaker, yes.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, just a point of clarification. We have an amendment to the motion by the Honourable Gavoka. It is really just that amendment that needs to be ayed or nayed. Are we now arguing the substantive because from the substance of the debate, now it seems like we are actually arguing the substantive? It is just a point of clarification. Can we restrict our debate, Madam Speaker, to whether those words get left out or left in, and then we can argue the substantive? I think right now, there is a state of confusion as to whether we start talking about the substantive motion and the amendment at the same time or not?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We are now debating on the amendment to the motion because at the end of all these, we will first vote on the amendment and directly after, we will vote on the motion. This is why we are dealing with

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the points raised by the Honourable Member are irrelevant because they do not seem to understand that when I am speaking on the amendment motion, I am actually justifying why the amendment motion ought to be the motion that should be carried – simple as that. I do not see the logic behind all their point of orders. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Let me come back to the point about the harshness and the long-term suspension of Members and that is why this motion is important. On that, Madam Speaker, let me also say that it seems that the Government side has double standards. I mean, there were instances where we could have said, “Let us file a privilege case against certain Members”, but we take it in the spirit of the debate in this House.

Let me give you an example. When we were debating the case of Honourable Ratu Naiqama and Honourable Draunidalo, accused of inciting ill-will, one could easily have made a case against Honourable Sudhakar, for example. On 3rd June, he viciously accused the NFP of playing the race card in 1977. Let me explain, Madam Speaker.

The verbatim of the meeting of this Committee on 27th September shows the Honourable Member again, referring to Hindu-Muslim tension in 1977 in obvious reference to NFP, as well as describing the *coups* of 1987 and 2000 as racist events. He was trying to justify the penalty against Ratu Isoa. Madam Speaker, let me just make this point and clarify that it was not the case but despite that, we on this side took it in the spirit of comment made in the debate.

In 1977, Madam Speaker, the reference was not a religious faction as far as the NFP was concerned, it was a battle between two individuals. It had nothing to do with their race or religion, and when the dust from the political battle settled, both leaders, Honourable Jai Ram Reddy and Honourable Koya, united and almost toppled the Alliance Government in 1982.

Again, Madam Speaker, in 1992, it was the late Mr. Koya who actually signed the nomination for the election of Mr. Jai Ram Reddy. So that reference by Honourable Sudhakar could have easily been

interpreted as inciting religious hatred. We did not take that. We do not have religious hatred in this country, Madam Speaker, we do not. Our religious groups are responsible groups. They would be actually horrified.

Some of those Members and I think Honourable Gavoka is right, this motion by this Government as other motions, they could be accused of inciting religious hatred because the comment was made, it was dealt with and then they bring this privileged motion, they are heightening this tension and hoping that somehow the Muslim community will vote for them in 2018, they will not. Many of them out there understand what the real issue is. They are good people, they know. That is the point I am making, Madam Speaker, this is why the suspension.

Then, Madam Speaker, we seem to be blatantly ignoring what our international organisations are saying, that we are part of. The IPU has made this very, very clear, most Parliaments do not go this unreasonable path. They deal with the issues in the spirit of the debate while warning Members of Parliament through the Office of the Speaker that they should respect the requirements in the Standing Orders.

Madam Speaker, this is my plea to the Government side, this is a very reasonable amendment motion by Honourable Gavoka. You have done that twice, there is a tyranny of majority on the other side. You have sent two Members out of Parliament. You have been told by the IPU that it was wrong, that it was unreasonable, yet you want to go again and suspend another Member ...

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- IPU is not a sovereign State.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You are a member of that. You brag about being in the international community of nations.

HON. SPEAKER.- You have twice made references to IPU saying that, and you are wrong, in fact it was not used by IPU.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Alright, Madam Speaker, I will take that back.

Madam Speaker, sovereignty does not give us the licence to go against international principles and best practices. Sovereignty comes with responsibility, decency, reasonableness in the laws that we apply within our own country.

HON. MEMBER.- Of course, but we decide for ourselves.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes we can decide but you are also part of the international community. You go out there on the world stage and say we are part of the global community. Let us begin to practice what we preach and bring some reasonableness back into ...

HON. MEMBER.- Stop him!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I have my time, Honourable Member, it is only the Madam Speaker who will stop me.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please the interjections are getting frivolous, please make refrain from making frivolous interjections.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

What we are saying, Madam Speaker, is that this is not a good example of the way in which we are going to deal with an elected Member of Parliament. Yes, we say things but many people in this country and some sitting on the other side, have said some of the most dumbest things about what they do, about matters which may not be related to religion or ethnicity but some of the dumbest thing that they have said. And we need to take that in the spirit of the debate because in any democracy, Madam Speaker, and if you look at democracies around the world you have laws which are applied in a blasphemous manner, in other words, you have no restraint and that becomes incompatible with democracy.

What we have done in the case of Honourable Ratu Lalabalavu and Honourable Roko Tupou Draunidalo and what this Government is intending to do with Honourable Ratu Tikoca is going to tantamount this Government because the tyranny of the majority is going to tantamount to decisions which are contrary to democracy and democratic principles. I urge the Government side to reconsider the original motion and support the amendment motion. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Honourable Bulitavu, you have the floor.

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

I rise to speak on both motions - the amendment motion and the substantive motion. I will speak first on the amendment motion, that is, to justify why we need to reduce the suspension from two years to 30 days. There is a big democratic reason, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Ratu Tikoca is a representative of the people and there are about 2,000 plus people who voted him into Parliament. For two years these people will not have Parliament representation. That is one point, a very important point and that is fundamental because that comes under our Constitution on the fundamental right to vote. If a Member of Parliament has committed a wrong, then why punish the people?

That is a fundamental issue why I supported the amendment motion that 30 days would be fair and two years will be very harsh, given that there will be no voice for the people in this Parliament and this is the House where the voices of the people will be heard from whoever voted us, whatever ethnicity and whatever polling station that it came from. That is something that we really need to ponder on and also consider, whereby suspending a particular Member of Parliament will also suspend the voices of the people. It also undermines the right of the people. That is why we really need to reconsider whether two years or 30 days.

I fully support, Madam Speaker, the amendment motion that 30 days will be sufficient and 30 days will be enough time for people after the Honourable Member has served that suspension to return and continue to represent the people.

I will now move to the substantive matter, Madam Speaker. I was looking through the Report and there are two submissions, both from the Opposition Members and the Government Members of the Privileges Committee. I will not talk about the processes and how they arrived to this but there is a big difference between this Report and the previous Privilege Report.

In this particular Report, Madam Speaker, we can all say that the offence or the privilege matter which the Honourable Member is said to have breached is still a contentious issue, given that the two submissions from the Committee are just words. The first element would be whether it was directed to the Muslim Community? If we are able to establish the first element whether it was directed to the Muslim Community, then you have to move into the second element of that.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, a point of order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, we are talking about the amendment motion here.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I have already asked.

HON. J. USAMATE.- So the debate is about the amendment motion. We have not concluded that discussion on that amendment motion. He is now beginning to talk about the substantive motion. We need to finish with the amendment motion, vote on it and then move on so I think this is becoming irrelevant.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The debate now is both on the amendment and the substantive motions because when it comes to the vote, we will vote for the amendment first and immediately after, we will vote for the substantive motion. So please you may speak on the amendment and the substantive motion now, and Honourable Bulitavu had made that very clear.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. That was the first element that I was talking about the words that were uttered or the references that were made or the prohibited reference that were made or the words that were part of the Honourable Member's speech was directed to the Muslim Community. That is the first element.

The second element will be whether those words are likely to promote or provoke feelings of ill-will or hostility between communities. There is no evidence in the Report that they established the second element. There was no evidence in here whether you extract from the *Facebook* that people were commenting and saying that they disagreed with him, that it was a racist comment, there was nothing. And it was done in June and this is July, August, September and nothing has happened. There has to be a propensity of whether it really did cause ill-will, whether it really did cause communities to be acting in hostility. Nothing happened!

We have to weigh this, Madam Speaker, and see whether the Report has really establish both elements or not. From my perspective the second element has not been established and probably the first element probably there could be some references given that they extracted from the *Hansard* that are pointing to the surnames of those who are mentioned who belong to a community. But that is only an assumption so whether the statement too of the Honourable Member ought to say or to prove that he was referring to that particular community or not.

Given that, Madam Speaker, I see that there is plenty doubt in this Report. I think you have to exercise some kind of extraordinary power under Standing Order 20 in order for the Committee to reconsider those deliberations and come up with evidence that will prove the elements that are there in Standing Order 62(4)(d).

Madam Speaker, with that, I thank you in regards to my contribution this afternoon on the amendment motion, the reasons to justify that and also on the substantive motion. I disagree with this because the Committee has not established both elements of what is required on Standing Order 62(4)(d).

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, just a while ago there was a group of students in this House, innocent children. Why did they come here, Madam Speaker? They came here because they have been told that this is the highest decision-making body in the country. Here, we have Honourable Members who are making decisions about their life.

Madam Speaker, those children who were sitting here do not know about the differences in ethnicity, religion but all they know is that they are Fijians. Madam Speaker, they all are products of this Constitution. Our Government is trying its best to ensure that we inculcate this ideology that we are all one people who have a common destiny and we are part of one Fiji, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this House is supposed to set this national trend of ensuring that we all are one people and we belong to one nation. When someone in this House breaks that norm and starts identifying people based on ethnicity or religion, Madam Speaker, what impact will that have on these little children - these innocent minds? Madam Speaker, at Headquarters and as the Minister for Education, I remind our staff that we are bestowed on a very prestigious position, to nurture these young children for future Fiji.

Madam Speaker, our country has been through a lot. Every time in the past when there is an election, leaders would campaign based on ethnicity, religious background and will divide the society and the community. It takes years, Madam Speaker, to fix that division and divide. Madam Speaker, with this Constitution, our Prime Minister is trying his best to ensure that we all belong to one nation and have one ideology.

Madam Speaker, when the Honourable Member who is supposed to be a role model comes to this House and says, “your kind”, he used the words, “your kind” to the Honourable Attorney-General some time back. We left it there saying, “Someday he will realise and this should stop”.

Madam Speaker, this is not the first time he has done this. We kept on tolerating, the tolerance that Honourable Nawaikula is asking for, the tolerance that the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad is asking for, the tolerance that the other Members are asking for, and we have been very tolerant, Madam Speaker. It is now time we send a message to the entire country and the international community as well saying that we, being a small nation, are well high above on these issues of religion and ethnicity. Otherwise, we will continue to divide our community and create stability in this country, Madam Speaker.

Honourable Ratu Tikoca said that he did not refer to the Honourable Attorney-General as Muslim or this group as Muslim. Madam Speaker, look at the names, you cannot find the name of a CEO who is a non-Muslim! Why did he not talk about the CEO of the Commerce Commission? Why did he not talk about the CEO of TSLB? Why did he not talk about the Chairman of LTA? Why did he not talk about the Chairman of ATH? Why, because they are not Muslims? Madam Speaker, he is trying to destroy the credibility of a small minority hardworking community in this country.

Madam Speaker, this House has set the example to the rest of the country. Whenever this happens, I get worried. The amount of work we are doing in the country in the education system to ensure that our children do not fall in this type of religious intolerance and ethnicity and then time and again, someone from the other side stands up and starts talking about ethnicity and religious beliefs. This is not acceptable, Madam Speaker. I suggest that we all rise up and send this message today saying that we will never ever tolerate this kind of language in this House. That is why I support this motion.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, I stand to support the amended motion that is before the House right now because in Honourable Ratu Tikoca’s speech, there was no mention of religion or ethnicity and we are making a big thing out of it right now.

Madam Speaker, I am the last person to be racist. This year, we had the honour of welcoming our brothers and sisters from Noco, who are now *Kai Rewa* and this is something I look at now and on hindsight we should have done it some time ago. But we have done that this year and we are very happy to have done that, Madam Speaker.

In Honourable Ratu Tikoca's case, there was no natural justice, Madam Speaker. He did not even appear before the Committee to be heard because there was already a decision made in terms of how that whole Committee hearing would have ended. Looking around this room, Madam Speaker, I see that most of us are Christians. I listened to Honourable Karavaki in most of his deliberations in this House, he talks on Christian principles and I look at us Christians in here and we sometimes forget that we are all sinners and that someone died on the cross and forgave us our sins. So what we should do, starting from the Honourable Prime Minister, he should have a forgiving heart, Madam Speaker.

Honourable Ratu Tikoca has already asked for forgiveness. He did that yesterday and I think we need not be with this mindset that we had with our first case, who has been suspended for two years and in the second case it was a termination because Honourable Lalabalavu is going to return after his two years' suspension; Honourable Tupou Draunidalo has been terminated because she has gone for the rest of this term and the way we are going now, for anything, people will be terminated and it is not the way we want to act. I am just looking at Christians and I am starting with the Honourable Prime Minister, who should have a more forgiving heart, that is what we need to have.

There are no children here but that is what we try to teach the children, that they should have basic Christian principles. However, we are not even looking at those basic Christian principles in the way we deliberate on people's lives and their future, and for people who have voted them in. I believe that we should go with the 30-day suspension (30 minutes would be even better), Madam Speaker, and just have a more forgiving heart and show the people that we can turn from the ways that we have had in the past and to a better future ahead.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, I rise to comment on the issues under discussion. I think when we are in this House, we have to put the best interest of our country first. We have to think about making decisions on things that impact this country into the future. There have been discussions, there have been some points made here about the fact that we need to take cognisance of the deliberations of the IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union) and I believe that is also important. But at the end of the day, the most important thing that all Members of this House must do is make sure that we think about the future of our country.

We know about the past of our country, we know about all the things that led to all the divisiveness. Our country and all around the world, the same thing has happened. We have been brought up in a history where all of our different communities have been segmented into different parts. When our colonial masters were in control of our country, *i Taukei* were expected to be in the villages, others were not expected to mix with them and we have been brought up with this whole culture of divide and rule where people are isolated and put into different segments, and that has permeated down the ages to our time. When people are isolated in their own communities, they get fed all kinds of different information that gets them to have suspicions about others in different communities, and all of our history has been like that on the basis of divide and rule, we have been brought up in these ways of always thinking negatively about others.

Over the years, we have seen in our history that politicians have used this to their advantage to gain votes and get into this House but also at the same time, it has led to the demise of this country economically, in terms of all the events that have happened in the past. That thing has been going on for decades and decades and decades.

Under this new Constitution in 2013, we have set the precepts of what we want or the foundations in which we want to build a new Fiji, a new Fiji in which we do not want to highlight these kinds of things, racial vilifications and divisive divide and rule tactics. Those are the things that are captured in this Constitution. If there is one thing we must safeguard, it is to make sure that we never ever allow

ourselves to fall back into the disarray that we had in the past. There has been some talk here about the importance of democracy.

Democracy is important but the heart of our democracy in Fiji is our respect for each and every community. There has been some comments made by the Honourable Bulitavu that the words that have been used by the Honourable Tikoca have not led to ill-feeling, ill-will or hostility between communities, but if you look at the words that are used in Standing Order 62(4)c, it says, I quote:

“It is out of order for a member, when speaking, to use -

(d) words that are likely to promote or provoke feelings of ill-will or hostility....”

This is the point that you made.

Whatever we utter or say in this House, people will take it and amplify it. They talk about it and it can fan the feelings of hatred and ill-will towards different communities. Once they start going down that pathway, as we have seen and the experience of so many countries around the world, it is very, very difficult to go back. And this is why we are saying, if we are looking at the future of this country, the future of democracy, the future of our current generation and all the future generations, we must make sure that every utterances in this House cannot be used to fan that ill-will or hostility. That is why this is a very, very serious matter.

If you go to the social media (I do not go there much), but the kinds of things that people fan up in the social media, the kinds of comments they make about the different communities are atrocious. It is really, really shocking. We must make sure that no one ever misinterprets what we say in this House, in the case of misinterpretation, we must make sure that we never allow people to interpret what we are saying. We must be very careful with the words that we choose and how we say it, so that people will never use that as an opportunity to fan the things of hatred towards one another.

So for me, that is the important thing that we must always address, the unity of our country to make sure that people do not start attacking each other because if we ever go again down that path, it will be very, very difficult for us to get out of it. Thank you Madam Speaker.

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

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

I rise to support the motion on the revision of the penalties that have been identified by the Privileges Committee and I wish to draw our attention to the rules of engagement in this House and that is in the Standing Orders. And we have heard from the other side all about what we are talking about in this motion but if I may just draw our attention to Standing Order 76.

Madam Speaker, like any other organisation, they have disciplinary procedures and to activate those disciplinary procedures, they have a manual in place to guide them, so that the course of justice can take place so that the penalties are not given out from a personally or emotionally-driven perspective, but it is grounded on the rules of justice.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I draw our attention to Standing Order 76 which clearly stipulates the penalties. If I may read out Standing Order 76(3) which says, and I quote:

“(a) on the first occasion, for three days (excluding the day of suspension);

(b) on the second occasion during the same session, for seven days (excluding the day of suspension); or

(b) on the third....”

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, are you referring to the Standing Orders ?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Yes.

HON. SPEAKER.- 76 ?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- 76.

HON. SPEAKER.- What you are reading, is not the same that I have.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Standing Order 76(3) (a), (b) and (c),

Madam Speaker, those penalties are totally different, they totally deviate. The penalties that has been given is a very harsh one and it is not even in the Standing Orders.

This Standing Order is made to guide us in terms of disciplining Members, even those two Members who have been suspended and even in the debate, we had raised the very same issue, that the penalties given are outside the Standing Orders.

In that case if it is outside the Standing Orders, then, why are we having the Standing Orders? If it says that the penalties as stated, (a), (b), and (c), then we should adhere to that. Why is the Privileges Committee creating new penalties, when it is outside the Standing Orders?

We have heard from the other side that yes, we must make decisions here in this House and not listen to IPU and the decision to be made in this House is clearly guided in the Standing Order. Why are we deviating from this Standing Order when it is the rule of engagement in this House, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker, on that line, I move and support the motion, that the penalties be aligned to the penalties as stated in the Standing Order. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Sudhakar.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, please allow me to just elaborate on something that Honourable Radrodro just presented ...

HON. MEMBER.- Educate!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- ... Yes to educate the other side as well.

What Honourable Radrodro is pointing out to is Standing Order 76 - Naming of member and suspension for grossly disorderly conduct. Those powers, Madam Speaker, are your powers if you may use it in the proceedings of Parliament while it is going on. If you name a Member, you find them to have acted in an inappropriate manner, you ask for a vote and then you have powers to suspend them for three days and for the same session for seven days or in the extreme case for 28 days.

Now, the proceeding that we have taken under this current Report, that is under Standing Order 134. This Standing Order, clearly stipulates raising matters of privilege.

In the current matter, when Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca raised those matters or whatever he said regarding the Attorney General “and his kind”, in that matter, the powers that are restricted to Standing Order 134 is raising a matter of privilege which the Honourable Prime Minister is the complainant, raised this with you the very next day and that was heard in the Committee.

The issue, the alleged offence occurred on 5th July. On 6th July, the Honourable Prime Minister referred the matter to the Speaker and then the options available to the Speaker are on Standing Order 134(2), and I will read for the benefit of the Members, I quote:

“(2) A member called upon by the Speaker to raise a matter of privilege must state briefly the facts that the member wishes to draw to Parliament’s attention and the resulting grounds”, which the Prime Minister did.

Thereafter the options are:

- “(a) there has been a *prima facie* breach of privilege, in which case the matter must be referred to the Privileges Committee for consideration;
- (b) there is a breach of privilege, in which case the member who raised the matter or any other member, may move a motion, without notice, based on the matter of privilege and the motion is debated immediately; or
- (c) there has been no breach of privilege, in which case the member must resume his or her seat.”

Madam Speaker, (b) and (c) will not apply because the proceedings have ended on 5th July and the Honourable Prime Minister raised the matter with you on 6th July, a day after. Therefore, the only option was Standing Order 134(2)(a), which is to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee and that was what Madam Speaker actually did - referring the matter to the Privileges Committee.

The issue of Standing Order 74 does not arise because that is during the hearing, proceedings of Parliament on that particular day.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SUDAKAR.- Yes, and this is the proceedings that have been....

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Where are the penalties?

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- That is for the Privileges Committee to decide, it is there.

Your question is absolutely right, where the penalties are.

Now, if you look at Standing Order 127, that is the powers of the Privileges Committee and there, if you read Standing Order 127(2), it says and I quote:

“(2) The mandate of the Committee is to—

- (a) bring to the attention of Parliament any breach of the privileges of Parliament committed by any person;
- (b) consider any questions of privilege as may be referred to it by Parliament or the Speaker whether under Standing Order 134 or otherwise;

- (c) inquire into any complaint that may be referred to it by Parliament or Speaker concerning any breach of privilege on the part of any person or persons; and
- (d) provide reports and recommendations to Parliament as a result of any matter referred to it.”

That is the power that is with the Privileges Committees.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- No, no, you are saying that.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member is saying, it is not two years. It is not for him to decide. He was there in the Committee and the Committee deliberated on the matter. It is on the gravity of the offence that the Privileges Committee recommends and all the submissions were heard. The Privileges Committee is not bound by any other rules of the Standing Orders to say that this is the maximum penalty. If the Honourable Member may refer to the Crimes Decree, in the Crimes Decree, there is a provision for maximum penalties and the tariff.

Now in the Standing Orders, the Privileges Committee is mandated to look at the gravity of the offence, to consider all the matters and then make recommendations. They do not decide on the penalties, we have not decided on the penalties, it is a recommendation that has been given to this Parliament which will be voted upon.

Now for the benefit of Honourable Radrodro and the other Honourable Members, the Standing Orders are clear on that and this is the rule by which the game is played in this Chamber. It is a matter of privilege and it is been referred to the Privileges Committee. It was not during the session that the Speaker would have exercised her powers under Standing Order 74. And just a point of clarification, what the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad raised about me that I raised the issue of an ethnic division is a factual matter, Dove and Flower faction, he knows about it. I did not say “Siddiq Koya and his kind”, I did not say “Jai Ram Reddy and his kind”. The offensive words here are ‘his kind’, ‘coup within coup’, this is what the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca had said.

Now that is the point of clarification but yes, Madam Speaker, just for the benefit of the Honourable Members, Standing Order 74 does not apply. Our powers are under Standing Orders 127 and 134. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will be suspending the Standing Orders as we will be going beyond 12.30 p.m., so that we can hear more on the debate.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I wish to make my contribution.

MADAM SPEAKER.- But before I call on Honourable Nawaikula, thank you Honourable Sudhakar for making a clarification on the difference between Standing Orders 76 and 127.

Honourable Nawaikula, you may have the floor now.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, we have two motions that are before the floor. The substantive motion is asking that the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca be suspended for the rest of the term of Parliament, et cetera and we have the amended motion. The amended motion is asking that, that should be reduced to 30 days and that he apologise.

On the amended motion, if I could speak on that, I support that entirely because the gist of the issue here is the reasonableness or the equality of the punishment.

I support what the Honourable Gavoka has said that it is this kind of motion that is coming here that is creating ill-will outside and we must be careful because our speeches here are publicized and people out there are listening to it. So, what Honourable Ratu Tikoca said did not create any ill-will, it is what that is venting out and the rhetoric that is coming up from the other side that is causing ill-will. We have relatives, we have our own people outside and they are listening to this. They can also get angry and what can make them angry is the kind of speeches and the kind of rhetoric that is coming from that side.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Are you threatening us?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No. I am supporting what he said. For that reason, we should not bring this kind of motion and we should agree to the amendment.

The other point is that its harshness. We should be guided by what our friends and what the other country say, even the IPU. I know that the IPU does not say, ‘do this’ but it advised and said “What happened to Naiqama Lalabalavu was harsh” they just asked. They did not make an order but requested us to immediately bring him back into the House.

So we should be guided by that because that is the common view or the common values of other countries who are also members of this Inter Parliamentary Union.

The third point are Standing Orders 76 and 134. We understand that, but we have a problem in the Standing Order because it does not define what the Privileges Committee can vent out and it leaves it open and what the Privileges Committee has been doing is to abuse the mandate. It is not your mandate, it is the mandate of the people by putting the recommendation on something that is totally beyond the scope of any other Parliament. They are laughing at us out there that we are doing this, two members have already gone and another one we are going to kick him out today.

On the substantive motion, Madam Speaker, if you look at the US, Donald Trump said, he is going to send out all the Muslims, he is going to make a war to stop that, but did they ever censure him? That is freedom of free speech. That is the level of democracy that they have and that should be the level of democracy we should aspire to.

So that being the case, to me that is on the substantive motion. It is *fait accompli* and I would rather address my speech to the international community to look at us and I would ask the US, New Zealand, Australia to look at what is happening here.

What we are doing to our democracy is that we are sending all these people out. We are part of that family and they should do something in relation to that. I want to tell them that we have had enough and they are not doing any service to us. They are sitting down with the other side, people who have blood on their hands, people who are abusing their rights, the Government that is doing all this, it is totally unfair.

Lastly, I want to urge the voters, the voters should understand what is happening here. They gave the mandate to that side of the House and they should now see what that House is doing. This should not happen come 2018 and I invite them to vote all you people out. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh you have the floor.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, I just a very short contribution on the amended motion that has been proposed by the Honourable Gavoka. Let me put this into perspective. Whilst I partly agree with what the Honourable Sudhakar said, this motion finds its territory right into Standing Order 76.

This is the third matter of privilege that we are dealing with in this House. The previous two were also referred to the Privileges Committee as a matter of privilege and the Privileges Committee on its own volition has, on both the occasions (and this is the third occasion) extended that matter of privilege into contempt of Parliament, and I will tell you why they did this. They have done this with a specific purpose so that they can dish out punishment outside of the Standing Orders.

Madam Speaker, this is a very serious issue. Whilst all the Honourable Members agree that the rules of engagement is the Standing Orders, it is your powers, Madam Speaker, in Section 76 to discipline Members there and then for disorderly conduct but when we extend this to Contempt of Parliament, then we import a whole range of punishments as you can see in the report. The Committee has recommended some very harsh punishments. Are we, as representatives of the people, deal with a Member who has offered his apology in that harsh way?

Someone said that freedom comes with responsibility. Yes, we agree and as far as utterances by the Honourable Ratu Tikoca, neither the NFP nor I will ever tolerate an assault on religion, ethnicity of any faith and in here, we have also heard that laws must be applied with restraint and reasonableness, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, so my argument is that there is a motion before the House which puts the House and gives the Honourable Members a conscience to decide upon a Member who has been a judge to be guilty of his actions.

Madam Speaker, this will augur well for Fiji, I mean, our diverse cultural existence that we have, people out there are very sensible. We always understate their willingness to understand things as if we are the only ones who know everything. But, Madam Speaker, if you go out in the communities as was alluded to by the Honourable Gavoka, people deal with these things in a very different way. The utterances we make in Parliament in many times, in many communities that I visit, they laugh it off as something that is happening in Parliament.

So my contribution, Madam Speaker, on the amendment motion is that, we must look at it with restraint. If we can do that and if that day is to dawn, it will be a great day for this nation, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Semesa Karavaki, you have the floor.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, may I contribute to the motions before the House, especially we amended motion. I know that we are being convened here today, particularly at this time, Madam Speaker, to judge one of our brethren and I am very particular with that because 1 Corinthians 2:15 says, “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judge of no men” meaning, Madam Speaker, if we are not spiritual we cannot judge because only the one that is spiritual, he himself or herself cannot be judged.

We here to pass judgment. I know, Madam Speaker, we are looking at the penalty here. The amended motion is requesting for this House to consider the penalty being proposed in the Report and to reduce it from suspending Honourable Ratu Tikoca for the rest of the Parliament term left to 30 days. And I know, Madam Speaker, that if this matter was dealt in the House right there and then when it occurred, Standing Order 76 would have been applied. You, Madam Speaker, would have applied one of those penalties under Standing Order 76.

Now, because it was brought after it had happened the only pathway that has to be dealt with under the Standing Order is for the Madam Speaker, to refer it to the Privileges Committee and for them to consider whether there was a breach and come back with a recommendation of what kind of penalty should be given. That penalty that is going to be recommended by the Privileges Committee should not differ or deviate from those that are under Standing Order 76. I have said this before and I am saying it again because there are totally two different standards applied there. The same issue, different pathways, different penalty.

I think, Madam Speaker, that should not be the case, we had to look at this carefully and it is my utmost desire, Madam Speaker, it is really really sad for us to be in this kind of situation. Now, it is the third time that we are to convene as a House for the purpose of judging one of our peers. It is very sad, and I hope Madam Speaker, we live in a community where we live together with angels because we are going to become like angels ourselves. Not finding ourselves to have this kind of bitterness, this kind of misconstrued idea and we are going to uphold only one standard, Madam Speaker, and that is the universal standard of morality. I believe that is what the Government aspires to do so that we can reach that kind of standard but this is not the pathway. This is not the pathway, to keep on penalizing people, penalizing people, penalizing people, because people are going to turn around and disagree.

The pathway is very clear, and I remember, Madam Speaker, in the biblical time, King Jehoshaphat, while at war with other nations, decide not to drill his soldiers to prepare for war but instead he called all the priests and send them all to all parts of Israel and Judah, to teach the people about this universal standard morality which is commandants of God. What happened? There was prosperity in the land. That is the most important thing. We do not look at our sovereignty as first and foremost, we look at the kingdom of God - seek ye first the kingdom of God. That is the thing we should be looking at, Madam Speaker, but now we are trying to ostracise and penalise anyone who is deviating.

No, we are the pathway! In heaven, there would be no other realm - too many religions or races, there is only going to be one standard of morality and all people from different races will live and worship one God. That is what we should be aspire for when we come to this. Now, we are talking about a penalty that we do not even have the spirit of forgiveness. You do not even have that! How can we dwell in a nation where all different races can come together, when that does not even exist in us?

Madam Speaker, it is sad. I was sitting here and I thought that I do not have any part to play or anything to say. But I believe that the spirit tells me, 'You have a part to play, you have something to say', and I apologise if some of you would not agree with me, probably in the tone that I use and I apologise for that because it hurts me, Madam Speaker, to dwell in a country, in a Parliament like this where we are called as leaders and we are trying to hurt one another. When we do not want the citizens that we serve to do that. If we cannot forgive each other here, then all the communities that we serve cannot forgive themselves or each other.

You know, Madam Speaker, I used to think about the peculiarity in the way Honourable Ratu Tikoca always conducts himself. I have never known him before, except the time that I was the Supervisor of Elections, he was a Commissioner and we always worked together, but not very close. Until we started meeting here in Parliament and I used to observe him because has a peculiar way of doing things. And those are the things that I have always tried to understand because we have to try to understand each other.

I read one of the writings that he had written and then it touches me. I did not know that he was the Operation Commanding Officer at the time that there was a widespread genocide in Rwanda, I did not know that. I did not know that he took part in that. I did not know that he observed firsthand the killings, the murders, the rapes and all of those things that took place in Rwanda. I did not know that. I just came to know this yesterday.

I did not know that those that commanded above him had experienced psychiatric sickness/problems because of that. Last night, at home, I was thinking about it. I said this is a man because of what he had exposed himself to, would not want those kind of problems that happened in Rwanda to happen in this country. He would have the intention of saying such words to result in those kind of atrocities. I do not believe that he is that kind of man that would do that. He had witnessed firsthand what happened over there, where millions and millions of people died. He would not be and I would not suspect, think or even believe that he would be that kind of person to say such words in here with the intention of causing a feeling of ill-will among the people, among the communities which would eventually generate people to harm themselves.

Madam Speaker, I think this is a time of realisation of this House and I plead with the Government, this is a time that we might examine the pathways we are taking. This is not the pathway to prosperity and peace. It is not, and I tell you Honourable Prime Minister, you continue to go on this and you will see and harvest the outcome of this.

Peace is a way of God, it is not the way of man. As I speak in here, I speak to everyone, Madam Speaker, whether in the Government or in the Opposition side, I speak to everyone and I speak to the nation because this nation deserves the highest standard of morality that we must live in, where we must exist like angels living in Heaven.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Especially to Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. SPEAKER. – Excuse me, please refrain from making remarks. Honourable Karavaki, please continue.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- I will not have the opportunity, Madam Speaker, year in, year out, to continue to advise this House on the morality of living. There are only years probably I am allowed to be here, and that will be over. It depends on us who are here today, whether we open our hearts to take it in or close it, so that it does not enter and it will not change any way of thinking, but I am doing my duty.

I plead, Madam Speaker, that this is a starting point for us and for this House, to look at each other in the eye and see that we have a hope, that we have a higher living standard that we can take the people of this nation to and stop the friction and the conflict in this House so that the people can look up here and behold the kind of life that they aspire for.

Madam Speaker, I am speaking on the amendment motion that I particularly request that we reconsider the kind of penalty that we are dishing out. I would support the amendment motion, Madam Speaker, that if there is a penalty, it should be 30 days. By doing that, I believe we are on the right path and we are beginning to move forward towards that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to speak on the substantive motion and at the same time reject the amendment motion. I find it ironical that Honourable Nawaikula could stand up and ask for the assistance of New Zealand and Australia about what we are doing in this House of ours when we should be asking the assistance of Australia and New Zealand to look at the comments that have been put forward by his fellow colleague.

Madam Speaker, it is with great sadness as well as anger and disappointment that I ask the Honourable Parliament to approve the motion before us today, to endorse the finding of the Privileges Committee that the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca has contravened Standing Order 62(4)(a) and (d) in circumstances that were grave and a serious breach of privilege. I say this with sadness because this is now the third time we have to make the decision to discipline a Member of this body for incivility and the second time for statements that incite racial division and hatred. What is saddest, Madam Speaker, is that the language of racial hatred and division is getting worse, despite the fact that we have rejected them and the mentality that spawns them.

We endured the incident in May of last year when the Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu used an obscene and highly offensive term in the vernacular to directly insult you, Madam Speaker. It was an insult that could have been seen as offensive to all women, and that reflected in some way the precarious situation that many women find themselves in, easily insulted with obscene sexual language and then just as easily raped or physically abused. That is because it is a small step to violence once a person or a group is dehumanised.

This insult against the Honourable Speaker, to you, Madam Speaker, demonstrated the extreme prejudice against women. It was a contemptuous and deeply misogynistic assault that also went against this very institution of Parliament and given our history, we need to take strong action to ensure that such an act would never happen again.

Then, only last June, we were forced to discipline Honourable Tupou Draunidalo for falsely attributing a racist statement to the Honourable Minister for Education. The false attribution was cunning in its execution. It was a coded means of setting ethnic group against another ethnic group, not by making a direct charge or statement. She was too clever for that. Instead, she falsely attributed a racist statement to someone else. Fortunately, Parliament could see her statement for what it was and took appropriate action but Honourable Ratu Tikoca's diatribe (I could not call it anything else but diatribe) was the vilest and most explicit statement of racial hatred we have heard on this floor since Parliament was seized in the *coup* of 2000. At that time, Madam Speaker, racist statements came from criminals who unabashedly declared the superiority and privilege of one race over the other and sought to institutionalise it by force of arms.

Today, we face something more subtle than we did in 2000 but also more pernicious and dangerous that an elected Member of Parliament, using the privileges of free expression granted to Members of Parliament in order to ensure honest debate, would seek to cast suspicion on one group. He would seek to divide Fijians, to create in the minds of the people the false idea that one group of Fijians is getting too powerful. He would turn the service and sacrifice that people from one community are giving to this country against them, as if their contributions were meaningless. He sees leadership positions in Government as trophies to be distributed as patronage, not as positions of public trust assigned to those most capable of serving the people in each area.

Madam Speaker, we should perhaps be grateful to the Honourable Ratu Tikoca for being as explicit as he was because it makes our decision easier. There was no coded language in his statement, no hidden message to decipher, no cunning or deception, his racism was on full display for all to see. His language was quite clear and plain. He thinks one group of people has too much power. One only has to wonder what he thinks the remedy should be, how Fiji should deal with people who work hard, lead a life of accomplishment and volunteer to serve their country.

Madam Speaker, this kind of incitement is nothing new. It is a part of a long traditional race baiting that we have seen all over the world, a tradition that we had hoped to end forever in Fiji. This is how hatred starts and hatred can easily lead to violence and we should look at other countries that have had to confront their racism, sometimes only after periods of great social upheaval or war.

Hitler and Nazi Germany blamed the Jews for Germany's ills and accused them of being too powerful, too accomplished, too wealthy and as a result, they killed six million Jews. The United States is still confronting the legacy of more than 300 years of racial inequality and now racial stereotyping that has led to numerous unwarranted Police shootings. Neighbours, who once lived side by side in places like Iraq and Syria have been set against each other by the forces of religious division and it often begins with words like those spoken by the Honourable Ratu Tikoca. That must never happen again in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, Fiji has a long history of racial vilification. In 1987, ethnic prejudice was used to justify the overthrow of Government, resulting in the subsequent fleeing of tens of thousands of Fijians from Fiji. This was followed by the widespread discrimination and a discriminatory Constitution.

In 2000, the overthrow of the Government was justified because the Prime Minister at that time was described as an Indian and as a Hindu. I cannot see any support from the members of the National Federation Party. This dark period in our history also saw Hindus and in Fiji being called devil-worshippers and devils.

Today, the vilification is against Muslims. Tomorrow, when it suits the aggressors, it could be the North Indians, South Indians and the Gujaratis or it could be the Chinese, the Catholics or the Seventh Day Adventists and could be the disabled, the women or the homosexuals, and as we have heard in the past, it is also even based on provincial background or origin. It could be against the people from Lau or the people from Rewa.

The Honourable Ratu Tikoca maliciously selected the names of people of the same faith or ethnicity and falsely alleged that they are running the country. Tomorrow, if he decides to vilify, simply for the sake of spreading hatred and discrimination, he could compile a list of Hindus, Christians, women or indeed a group of people and claim that as a basis for any prominence they have achieved within government.

Madam Speaker, the point is that, we have to be vigilant in punishing any form of discrimination and jealously guard against any efforts to promote such hatred. We cannot deliver the economic benefits and advancement that our people deserve if we reduce issues to communal demarcations such as religion, ethnicity and provincialism. We will continue to lag behind.

Such demarcation and discrimination, Madam Speaker, have caused great damage to this nation and the Fijian people, so they must never be repeated. We, in this Parliament, must be especially vigilant. Our disagreements must always be civil and respectful. We are elected leaders, as we constantly heard from the other side of the House, and we must show the people that it is possible to disagree and still live together and understand each other. That is the only way our democracy can survive. So we must be keen to stop rhetoric that is based on racial prejudice and be uncompromising in punishing it.

Yes, Madam Speaker, I do make this statement with sadness - sadness that we still must confront this kind of prejudice and ignorance in this Chamber. I am saddened that we, in this Chamber, are not leading the people to a more enlightened discourse and that we are not demonstrating by our actions and our words on how we can unite Fiji, unite as Fijians, and see each other as human beings and fellow countrymen, not as members of a race or a religion or an ethnic group.

That is the Fiji we must aspire to, that is the Fiji we want, Madam Speaker, and I am determined to make it a reality. We cannot do so if we tolerate the language of racial division and hatred in the very institution that is supposed to bring all Fijians together for the common good.

Madam Speaker, we have now had three breaches of privileges in less than a year and a half. Parliament has taken a stand twice before and things should be getting better, but this is the worst breach

yet. We, in Parliament, must stand for what is right in Fiji for civil discourse and for mutual respect and we cannot cede one centimetre in this. We must uphold a high standard for discourse and for the behaviour of our Members.

Therefore, for the integrity of this parliamentary body, Madam Speaker and for the future of democracy in Fiji and for the hope of unity and dignity for all Fijians, I ask that Parliament approves the findings and recommendations of the Privileges Committees and I fully endorse the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Dulakiverata, you have the floor.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, I want to contribute to the motion. The previous speaker had brought up the penalty as stated in the Standing Orders and which has not been followed. We also heard that this motion, had it come to this House when it was committed, it would have been dealt with according to those penalty clauses.

Madam Speaker, I remember in one of your rulings that matters should not be brought up after they have been committed in this House. This complaint has come to this House more than two months after it had been committed.

Madam Speaker, I am not a lawyer but after reading all the papers in the Committee's Report, I found something extraordinary. I saw that you had already written to the Honourable Ratu Isoa that the matter has already been dealt with by the Honourable Deputy Speaker and I think that was the end of this issue.

The letter written by the Honourable Prime Minister to you, Madam Speaker, to again review a decision that it has failed to decisively deal with this matter, I think Fiji is over ruling your decision and to come from the Honourable Prime Minister, this is the very last person that should bring this thing to this House because the independence of the Speaker should be respected.

Madam Speaker, because of this, I think there is no case to answer. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other input, I now give the floor to the Honourable Gavoka for his right of reply to the amendment to the motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Madam Speaker, as I was sitting here today listening to the tone from the other side of the aisle, people whom I respect, I was horrified and I thought I had to stand up and make a plea that we tone down the tone of the discussion.

I say this, Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, people are listening in from across the group. If I can just tell a short story here, Madam Speaker, I think it was in the late 1960s in my village, there was a Dharsan Singh family and their son Ravi Chand, who ran the shop. I happened to be there that day when the Legislative Council was sitting and we were listening to the radio. I believe it was Honourable Vunivalu and Honourable K.C.Ramrakha, who were going off on a tangent and Honourable Vunivalu was going on about Fijians issues.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Oh!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- And this was Honourable Ratu Ravuama Vunivalu, who was in the Legislature back in the 1960s. He was a quite an eloquent speaker and a brilliant orator and likewise, I believe, K.C. Ramrakha. He was going off on the Fijian side and Mr. Ramrakha was going off on the

other side and the Speaker said, “Guys, guys, guys, there is no more of that here, it should not go on racial lines” and I could see how Ravi Chand and I enjoyed that interjection by the Speaker, that he would bring these guys back to issues instead of going off on racial lines. I do not think it was only me and Ravi, there were other people around and we were really happy and said, “That is good, that is good, that is good. Bring them back to issues that are not racial.”

I must have been 16 then, today I am 66 and that kind of dialogue, Madam Speaker, is still happening across Fiji. People are still congregating together as one people across the communities and listening to what is happening today.

When my learned colleague, the Honourable Koya talked about Vatukarasa, the *Eid* and the dinner they will have together tonight, would you rather that they speak about a suspension of 30 days or an expulsion of two years? This is where I am coming from. Just go back to that experience I had back then, 50 years ago and what is likely to happen when we do this today. It is much more reasonable for the various people in this country to say, “I think Honourable Ratu Tikoca made a mistake and I believe he should be punished and I think 30 days should be fine”, so that we go on with life.

We came away that day and I still remember this, how happy that I was in Fiji, happy there was a legislature, happy that independence was happening and happy that Ravi Chand and I had the same opinion about the way things should go. That is why I am not lecturing. I did not lecture, I am pleading, please, see ourselves in the small communities around this country. What will happen tonight when they sit around, having a meal together or celebrating something across this country, and I can say this - a suspension of 30 days is much better as part of the dialogue as opposed to expulsion. Expulsion is too severe, expulsion will breed the type of feelings that we do not want in our country. That is why I said, please tone down.

I was quite shocked that a name of a community has been inserted into the dialogue. I would have rather we were just talking about people broadly as opposed to naming a community because, Madam Speaker, it is not a perfect world. Our Parliament is just starting, we have had a lot of hiccups along the way, we have been hurt many times but we are on a way to recovery, it is only two years.

Let us have sense of balance about all of these. Responsibility? I agree with the Honourable Leader of the Government - freedom comes with responsibility, yes, the responsibility is not to fan the flame. I would have liked to have sat with the other side of the House in private and iron this out and not do this before the nation today.

I can speak on a number of issues. They say on the other side of the House, “Diversity is our strength.” True, but did we have to abolish the GCC? These are the kinds of issues that are going to come up. We must temper this with the sense of reality and we are adults, we are people who know what happens out there. We should approach this in a responsible manner. It is good to be principled, it is good to take the high ground as we see here today but I can also throw things across the room.

We can demand that the Honourable Prime Minister of this country stands up and apologises to the *iTaukei* when he said, “Chiefs are accidents of birth.” Do you want to go down that road? We heard it and we took it easy and we let it go because hopefully down the line he will change. We can very easily take him up on that issue but we did not because these are very sensitive issues. You cannot say those words to the chiefs, you know how deep it is. So, what I am asking here is to tone down the rhetoric, bring something more realistic and ensure that our people enjoy the company between themselves because they are not in Parliament, they are all over the country today.

Madam Speaker, if we do not accept an apology from the Honourable Ratu Isoa, then that side of the House has no right to accept a *Mata-ni-Gasau*. In many parts of Fiji today, the Honourable Prime

Minister goes visiting and chiefs are presenting their *Mata-ni-Gasau*. What is the *Mata-ni-Gasau*? It is an apology, and he accepts them. It does not mean that you do not punish but it means, “Look, let us reconnect, let us be one again”, the punishment is still there. So with an apology by Honourable Ratu Isoa to the people of Fiji, to the community and he gets punished, that is the way it should go. If you do not, then he should not accept the *Mata-ni-Gasau* from anywhere in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, what will happen in this country now? As I have said, we are only two years into our Parliament. What we are putting in place is a payback syndrome. In other Parliaments because they know that one day they will be sitting on this side of the House, they act reasonably when they have the power. That is why committees do not go the way we are going today and recommend total expulsion because the sitting arrangement here will change my friends, maybe not in 2018 but in 2022, 2026 and 2030. That is why our Parliaments must not be a Parliament that is driven by a payback syndrome.

Imagine if in 2018, we win 26, you win 24, what we could easily do to strengthen our numerical superiority is to do things like this and put three people out of Parliament. That is the payback syndrome we want to avoid in this country. Sure enough! If you go this way, you do not know about 2018, the payback is going to be part of the way we do things, and that is wrong.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- We’ll see that!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- We’ll see that? I am from Nadroga. I was in Labasa and someone stopped me in Labasa and said, “Hey, Parliamentarian.” I said, “Sir”. He replied, “All the schools closed today, no water. All the roads”, and he gave me a list of things that were wrong and he said to me, “I voted FijiFirst but next time only half of us are going to vote FijiFirst.” I am from Sigatoka, this was told to me in Labasa. So, you have serious problems so you be aware of that. You have serious problems.

You would be sitting here so do not encourage this payback syndrome. Do not encourage it, please! Our Parliament must not be on a payback thing, we must be mature. We make our recommendations, “Alright, he made a mistake”, give it to the Speaker and the Speaker dishes out the punishment that is appropriate.

Madam Speaker, what we must be careful about, from this side of the House and I love the other side of the House, it is this sense of righteousness that is breathtaking. It is really breathtaking, your sense of righteousness. They can say whatever they want to say about the *iTaukei* but would take issues on what we say about someone else. I mean, in his lifetime, who would say that chiefs of Fiji are accidents of birth? Who would say that in this country? Did we take issues with that? And now you take issues on something that was not even mentioned at a particular community but only aimed at certain professionals in the country.

The sense of righteousness is so mindboggling, Madam Speaker, so I plead with everyone, please let us relook at this and go down to a punishment that can help this country heal, which is very important. You expel, it is a different ballgame altogether. You suspend for 30 days, dialogue can still continue but once you expel, dialogue ends. Once dialogue ends, that is it, and like I said about, the sense of righteousness.

A very prominent leader from New Zealand said to us, “If we do what you do in New Zealand, our Parliament will be very empty.” That was what he said. So we be careful. Fiji is not an island, Fiji is part of the global community. You cannot be saying, “Friends for all and enemy of none”.

Madam Speaker, I think the plea is there. Think of our people who are watching today, they will love us when he goes on a 30-days suspension as opposed to a two-year expulsion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I will now give the floor to the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament to speak in reply.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, again, I reiterate the fact that all the Members of the

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- A point of order, Madam.

HON. SPEAKER.- Yes, point of order.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I ask a question, is this the completion of the debate? I am not too sure whether you are ending the debate. I am still waiting to actually participate in the debate. Can I be given my chance, please?

HON. SPEAKER.- At the end of the speech of the Honourable Member who spoke before Honourable Gavoka, I looked around to see if someone else wanted to speak and I did give a few minutes. No one else

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Three of us stood, Madam.

HON. SPEAKER.- No one else spoke, so I gave Honourable Gavoka to present his right of reply.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- This is on the amendment.

HON. SPEAKER.- That is on the amendment and it will follow directly with the right of the reply of this substantive motion.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I as a Member of this august House, I deserve to rise up to present my statement because I was waiting for everyone to finish, then I make my statement.

HON. SPEAKER.- I give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

To Members of the Honourable House, what had transpired all through today did not reflect my concern. As I joined Parliament, I joined with the feelings that I represent a certain community and everything that I address here comes from the community. Therefore, if I speak here without referring to the community, then I do not represent them anymore. Things that I speak here in this august House are done with consultations with the people who voted me in, and that is democracy.

When I presented my message that is now the subject of the debate, it was almost 17 pages of trying to harmonise the language to be used so that it can bring the attention to the august House, especially to the Government, to please hear the concerns of the people of Fiji that I represent. So when I rise, I rise with the people whom I represent.

When the concern is given, if you look at the very ending part of my presentation, “I urge Government, please do something about this so there is nothing will happen because with experience since the first *coup* up to now, when turbulences occur, separation of other races occur, then the *coup* happens.”

I have been through all these *coups* and I have been to areas that you will never even dream of. Never dream of! And I still stand here, upright to address the importance of Government, please address when things are bubbling, that is why I raise this concern.

You know that I did not address any religion, nor did I address any race. It is purely a concern of a gentleman, a peacekeeper, who had gone around all the world to fight only with one thing – peace and no instability. And I have fought a lot of wars doing just that, and if I represent people who are concerned about the peace of this nation, please Honourable House, understand where I am coming from.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I understand your response, Honourable Prime Minister and I have no fear whatsoever. Remember that! But I will continue to raise the concern.

I would want to relate to you a letter that I wrote to the Honourable Madam Speaker and before I do, I had asked the Honourable Madam Speaker to allow me to do this in this august House.

Madam Speaker, I wrote a letter to you on Wednesday, 12th July, 2016 but I have yet to send it to you because I was looking for a book called, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, written by Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire about the failure of mankind, that led to the most atrocious genocide ever experienced in this century.

When I returned from Kazakhstan, I stopped over for a few days in Sydney looking for a copy but I failed to find one, and that is why this letter is still yet to reach you. The events have changed and I wish to read my letter to you in this august House and to the people of Fiji.

“Dear Madam Speaker: Failure of Humanity.

The failure of humanity is the constant fear that lingers on my mind and perhaps, my life’s motivation to do and exhaust all that I can so that it never prevails.

Since I joined Parliament, I often asked myself, why am I different from all my other parliamentary colleagues? Even the Opposition Leader, Ro Teimumu, related her anxiety sometimes when I stand to contribute. I asked myself, is it my voice or how I look or the way I present myself or the combination of all?

Even when I said something that should be pleasant to the ears and yet, people react with suspicion. I pray to God for humility and yet I struggled. Something is tricking my conscience, my inner feelings and yet I still could not locate it within me. I often admire and ask other Parliamentarians of their coolness in debates and I, with my confusion, I struggled on.

This morning, Wednesday 12th July, 2016, when I woke up at 6.00 a.m., it dawned on me that this might be the experience that continues to haunt me that I went through in Rwanda, where one of the most atrocious genocide ever experienced in this century occur. I went through this experience when I witnessed the failure of humanity, not experienced by anyone else in Fiji nor in Parliament and anywhere else in the world but only for us, still living, a few.

My Force Commander, Lieutenant General, Roméo Dallaire and six of my senior Military Observers under my command from other UN contributing nations, all ended up in psychiatric centre for treatment and some that are most unfortunate may not recover for their lifetime.”

Madam Speaker, when the whole world was cut off, I was ordered by Headquarters, United Nations to reduce my military observers to 70 from 250, and all formed peacekeeping units were ordered to return to their own country, only a handful was left behind to stop the massacres and the killings. I commanded those that left behind. I tried to and negotiated peace and to submit daily situation reports to the United Nations and to the world that never cared about the atrocious genocide, and and the world left us to fend for ourselves without arms.

In six weeks almost, a million of Tutsis were brutally murdered by the Hutus. These two ethnic groups are all but one, the Rwandese. There is only one mosque in Kigali, the Capital of Rwanda but every three miles there are Christian churches.

I have served often in the Middle-East and I was the UN Chief Operation Officer and Chief Military Observer in Islamic Somalia, located at the Capital of Mogadishu. Every time I thought that religion, especially the Islam is the problem but this I can categorically state without reservation that it is not true, these Christians in Rwanda were the executors of these horrendous genocide. I could not believe my eyes, as a Christian. If it is not the religion and if it is not ethnic and if it is not the economic collapse, then what?

Rwanda was the failure of mankind. I do not want this ever to be repeated in this world and especially, our Fiji. We, the unfortunates who witnessed the genocide in Rwanda, we shook hands with the devil. We smell the devil every day. We eat and sleep with the devil. We saw the devil every day of our lives in Rwanda. Fiji is already showing signs that I saw in Rwanda.

Whilst I was negotiating truce under the United Nation as the year before the calamity, Madam Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree with the conclusive remarks of General Dallaire in his book, *'Shake hands with the Devil'*. He said, "I still think of that little boy who, if he lived, would be a teenage as I write. What has happened to him and the tens of thousands of orphans of the genocide? Did he become yet another child soldier in the region's wars?"

When I think about the consequences in the Rwandan genocide, I think first of those who died in the agonising death from machete wounds, inside the hundreds of sweltering churches, chapels and missions where they have gone to seek God's protection and ended up instead in the arms of Lucifer. I think of the more than 300,000 children who were killed and of those children who became killers in a perversion of any cultural ideal childhood. And I think of the children who survived often by the genocide and the ongoing conflict in the region since 1994, they have been effectively abandoned by us as we abandoned their parents in the killing fields of Rwanda. When we remembered the Rwandan genocide, we have also to recognise the living hell these children inherited.

Madam Speaker, I am bereaved because of the constant concern that is haunting me about Fiji's future. I would like this country to be the safest in the world as "the way the world should be." Will it develop to a level where we are all able to enjoy its freedom – freedom for all? I strongly believe that I be vocal of my concern in the most appropriate people's house, the House of Parliament, because I still believe that the Government still has ears to hear me out one of these days and discuss my concern. I am not a racist, nor do I have any right whatsoever to belittle any religion as I am a sinner myself.

Madam Speaker, let me end my concern by the words of General Collin Powell, former US Secretary of State and former Chairman of the US Joint Chief of Staff said, and I quote:

“Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.”

I am confident that we still have the leadership to hear us out.”

Madam Speaker, if at any time I hurt Members of Parliament and the people of Fiji during my recent speeches or even at all the speeches and remarks that I made in the past, I beg humbly to apologise to all, and request of all your forgiveness, please.

I enclose the book of the genocide of Rwanda – *Shake Hands with the Devil*, written by Lieutenant Romeo Dallaire, who was my Force Commander whilst I served under him as the United Nations Chief Military Observer. I featured in this book and I hope the book will shed some light on how a country collapsed when humanity fails.

The movie *Rwanda* still could not capture the atrocities in Rwanda. Dallaire’s book speaks volume of the manifestation but the real thing can never be captured second-hand. Those who we live through it will wither and die with it but they will never be able to relate or tell the magnanimity of the real atrocity. Human tongue is lost for words, and I say, “Have a great reading, Madam”.

Madam, now that I have identified the reason that is pricking my conscience and have revealed it to you, I believe I rest my case. *Ni vosoti au.*”

And to you, Members of Parliament, I remind you of Psalms 23, continually read that to guide you in your future leadership in Parliament and elsewhere that you will conduct your very important business of leading this country well.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament to speak in reply to his motion.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.-.- Madam Speaker, you have heard this side of the House and we have indicated as to why we support the substantive motion before the House as deliberated upon by the Privileges Committee.

Madam Speaker, this is not about buying Muslim votes. As we had stated in the previous two cases that have been dealt with appropriately here, this is a principled approach. This is about Fiji and this is about the institution of Parliament. We want our democracy to be sustainable and we want to build a future for our children. It is, as I stated in my opening remarks, quite unfortunate that Members on the other side do not seem to take the matter of privilege and the Standing Orders as seriously as we do.

Madam Speaker, we agree with the Honourable Member, the Honourable Ratu Tikoca, that we want peace in this country and, of course, the leadership of Government is taking this stance so that we can have that peace in this country. But unfortunately the very words uttered do not promote that environment of peace that we want to build, that we want to create and most importantly, consistent with the democratic principles that we all aspire to.

We need peace in Fiji. We all know our history and it is shameful. Let the others laugh, but it is about us. It is about our sovereignty, it is about our future.

Madam Speaker, it is always good and encouraging to hear when we have heated debates in this House and the other Members on the other side of the House talk about dialogue, talk about unity but I have been observing all these two years, Madam Speaker, but their strategies are wrong. They have opted for a strategy of confrontational politics. Dialogue happens outside this Honourable House. The problem is, they hate the Honourable Prime Minister, most people, and they do not acknowledge his leadership.

Dialogue, bipartisan and unity is not something that we just come and say in this Honourable House, we should have humility. Let us humble ourselves as leaders, create the environment, so that we can move forward.

Madam Speaker, one of the main purposes of awarding punishments is deterrence, and that message has been consistent from Government. We take matters of privilege seriously and hopefully, it will be a deterrent to all Honourable Members, including this side of the House. And as responsible leaders, I hope that we take responsibility and we take ownership of our own Parliament.

I have stated this already, Madam Speaker, we do not want to do this. These are what I called in the first instance, the 'lonely moments of a leader' but that is leadership. Someone has to do the unfavourable decision and unfortunately, it is this Government but it is about a principled approach. We stand by the substantive motion and we put the motion before the House for vote, Madam Speaker.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- Firstly, we will vote on the amendment to the motion, to reduce the level of suspension for the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca to 30 days. Does anyone oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

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

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	12
Noes	-	30
Not Voted	-	8

Motion is defeated.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will now vote on the substantive motion.

Question put.

The question is, that pursuant to Standing Order 47, that:

- 1) Parliament endorses the findings of the Privileges Committee that the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca has contravened Standing Order 62(4)(a) and (d) in circumstances that were grave and a serious breach of privilege;
- 2) Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca issues a public apology;
- 3) Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca must be suspended for the remainder of the term of Parliament with immediate effect;

- 4) During the period of suspension, the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca is not allowed to enter the Parliamentary precincts, including the Opposition Office.
- 5) Immediately upon the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca's suspension, he must be ordered to leave the Parliamentary precincts and to remain outside of Parliamentary precincts; and
- 6) If the Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca fails to comply with any of the above, the necessary enforcement measures must be imposed to ensure compliance.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of "ayes" and "noes")

There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	30
Noes	-	13
Not Voted	-	7

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. We will now break for lunch and we will resume at 2.30 p.m.

Thank you Honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 1.47 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.33 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will resume from where we left off.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON HIS EXCELLENCY'S ADDRESS

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.-Madam Speaker, I think it is very unfortunate that we cannot call or use the word `lies' in this House because some of the statements that were given by the Honourable Prime Minister on Monday amounted to that, but allow me to correct these.

Madam Speaker, if you will allow me to quote the Honourable Prime Minister, he stated, "The *iTaukei* are not disadvantaged in any way at all and to say otherwise is a lie." I will now give examples of how they are being disadvantaged:

1. Their right to the full market rent on their land has been removed by the *iTaukei* Leases and Licences Regulation so that when our stakeholders get their full market share on investment on Native land, they are denied and given only the Unimproved Market Value of Native land. In that way, they are subsidising development on Native land, as well as development of the nation.
2. Their right to prior consultation and informed consent that was entrenched in Section 185 of the 1997 Constitution was purposely removed by the 2013 Constitution.
3. Their right to independently manage their native resources, namely the Native land was removed by the *iTaukei* Land Trust Act (Amendment) Decree that nationalised control of the *iTaukei* Land Trust Board, making the Honourable Prime Minister its Chairman. The Honourable Prime Minister should know that because that was the decree that he himself passed in breach of their rights which has allowed him to be Chairman of iTLTB.
4. Their right to maintain their cultural institution was unceremoniously removed by the *iTaukei* Affairs Decree that terminated the GCC. The Honourable Prime Minister wrongly justifies himself by saying that GCC is not an *iTaukei* institution, but if he properly reads ILOC 169 and UNDRIP, you will see that they are also allowed to develop and adopt their own institution in whatever way they choose.
5. Their right to be brought up at par in education as well as other practices to put them on equal par with other races was removed by the termination of the 50/50 share in scholarship and government employment. If the Honourable Prime Minister will want to prove his point that I am wrong in this, then he should immediately release the ethnic breakdown of Toppers beneficiaries in the Ministry of Education.
6. Their right to utilise their fishing ground without interference was removed by the Surfing Decree that allowed the Government to take it away without notice.
7. Their right to use and manage their land independently in a manner they choose and to be consulted on how to use it was taken away by the Land Use Decree.
8. Their right to independently manage their Native land and their leases on Native land was taken away by the Mahogany Decree.

Madam Speaker, the list goes on, but these are serious because it is their rights or what we call their group rights or indigenous rights that are being, not only disadvantaged, but have been abused and

breached by these laws and policies. So they are not only placed at a disadvantage but worse, they are being abused of their human rights.

Madam Speaker, the definition of racism is 'to favour or deny someone on the basis of their race or ethnicity.' These policies and laws are designed to deny them those rights on the basis of their ethnicity and are clearly racists. I know this is what Honourable Tupou Draunidalo meant and if both sides of this House cannot understand that, then something must be wrong with all of us.

It is not that indigenous Fijians want to put themselves at a privileged position in our country, it is simply that they want to be given their human rights that they are entitled to. And the UN has already advised the Fiji Government that it is wrong for it to deny or terminate indigenous Fijians their rights by terminating them, but that its job is to balance those rights with the rights of other communities, and the greatest example of that is the *iTaukei* Land Trust Act where certain land are reserved for their exclusive use and the rest is made available to the public.

The Honourable Prime Minister had also misinformed this House that, if I may quote him, "The rights of *iTaukei* are guaranteed much better in the 2013 Constitution more than ever." Madam Speaker, I feel it is sad to hear this from the Prime Minister who is the primary architect of equal citizenry which is aimed specifically at removing indigenous rights to make everyone equal. Remarks of this policy - equal citizenry, are obvious in the 2013 Constitution that purposely removed indigenous rights' customary institution namely, the Great Council of Chiefs, and indigenous rights consultation and prior and informed consent in Section 185. So, purposely, the 2013 Constitution removed the Great Council of Chiefs as well as the right for prior consultation that was entrenched under Section 185 of the 1997 Constitution.

The only aspect of indigenous rights that the 2013 Constitution recognised is their proprietary right of ownership of their Native land; that is the only thing. We all know that the 2013 Constitution has also purposely removed the reference to group rights that was there in the 1997 Constitution, as well as the authority for Parliament to recognise and implement customary laws. All these were taken away, so what I want to say to the Honourable Prime Minister is to please stop kidding us.

Madam Speaker, I now wish to talk about rural development, more specifically on how some people are being left behind and how their needs are being tucked away into the Government's low priority list. I am talking here about the poor indigenous population, who reside in their villages in rural areas. Now, we do not talk in terms of "constituency" under the 2013 Constitution, but my Party has assigned to me an area of responsibility covering the Cakaudrove West region and encompassing some 82 villages. These are the people I am referring to here and I know that I speak for all indigenous communities in their villages throughout Fiji.

As a Member of Parliament, I have had the opportunity to look at their situation from both sides. Here in this House, the Government makes a lot of song and dance about its unprecedented programmes, developments and measures to bring about prosperity. On Page 4 of His Excellency the President's Address, he talks about national prosperity, access to affordable transportation, about connecting more people to electricity, water and telecommunications, of assisting people with small micro business, of providing free water and subsidising electricity and, of course, all those who are benefitting from the unprecedented measures to rehabilitate *TC Winston*.

Madam Speaker, it is a different story on the ground and I found that these indigenous village communities are ignored at most times and their needs are tucked away at the low priority list of Government. Let me now illustrate this from my findings on my seven day Northern Development Tour. So between 19th September to 24th September, I visited all villages in the *vanua* of Savusavu and that is to say, Nukubalavu, Nacekoro, Savudrodoro, Yaroi, Naidi, Vivili, Waivunia, Nacavanadi and Nagigi. But

before coming to Savusavu, I came across a very big embarrassment for the Ministry of Infrastructure. At Lomolomo, there is a stretch of road there, about half a kilometre, has been sagging for the last five years. This year, they engaged a Chinese contractor but three months after it was completed, it sagged again, at a cost of (I am told) \$1 million. So the Honourable Minister, please explain to us, how much money has been wasted on this (Lomolomo) and why can the engineers not fix that stretch of the road?

On *TC Winston* rehabilitation, Madam Speaker, Nukubalavu had 21 houses which were completely destroyed; Nacekoro - six; Savudrodro - four; Yaroi - seven; Vivili - seven; Naidi - four; Nacavanadi - five and Naigigi - 18, so the total number of houses that were destroyed in these villages were 72. The number of cases asking for assistance is more than 200. These figures, of course, are subject to confirmation by the Minister for Rural Development and Disaster Management.

Madam Speaker, what is sad to see is that, seven months on, the victims are still being looked after by their neighbours, some are sheltering under the floors of their former homes, others still cannot cope to wait and have gathered loose materials to build temporary shelters, while others continue to live in tents. I saw this, and this is what I am saying. Everywhere in these villages, you can see bits and pieces of material, a pile of timber here and roofing iron under that house and under this house, but no construction and no repair works was being done. The problem they say is in the delay of the distribution of material.

At Nukubalavu, Madam Speaker, the villagers said that the Honourable Prime Minister was there to distribute their cards and they have followed all procedures, including going up to the hardware to have their cards swiped. The problem again is delivery. Sometimes, there is delivery for certain material, at other times other material, but not complete.

At Savudrodro, however, there was a full delivery made and they were building a complete house, but there was one problem here. The shed that they were building was definitely smaller than the 24ft x 16ft which is the usual size in previous assistance, and they had another problem in that, one of the corners had sagged because of unprofessional carpentry work. So it had to be tommed up, they have to pop it up.

At Nacekoro, they had an additional problem. It is, I think (and the Honourable Minister for Disaster Management can confirm) the same with Nukubalavu and Nagigi. Government has not allowed some of the houses to be rebuilt on the same foundation, insisting they relocate because of climate change but the village of Nacekoro cannot extend because they have a common boundary with a freehold and according to them, the Honourable Prime Minister has agreed to assist in the purchase of the adjacent freehold land but nothing has happened.

Madam Speaker, in the *vanua* of Savusavu, villagers themselves were able to point out to me issues that they find problematic in the unprecedented way of rehabilitating cyclone victims. In previous years, Government had a Department of Cyclone Relief, made up of professional carpenters who were able to build, supervise and oversee delivery, and to ensure that strong engineering works in the structures are built. *TC Winston* does not have this and they can see a lot of problems; firstly, the quality of the material that are being delivered, the availability and cost of carpenters to do the work and the guarantee of the structural strength to withstand a cyclone.

At Nagigi Village, Madam Speaker, I was reminded by one of the professional carpenters from the crowd that the cement delivered is substandard and that they were delivering H3 timber instead of F7, which is the quality that can withstand the cyclone. No plan was being submitted with the material and they were asking, "Who is going to pay the cost of the carpenters who are now quoting one-third of the material cost? These questions were being asked by single mothers and disabled persons, who cannot afford to pay a carpenter.

Here also the professional carpenter said that the standard building over the past years is a 24ft x16ft and in 2009 during *Cyclone Thomas*, it cost about \$12,000 to \$15,000 to build that kind of house. Earlier than that, 15 years ago, it was \$8,000 but they doubt very much that that can be built now with the sum of \$7,000.

Madam Speaker, I am happy that the Honourable Minister for Disaster Management will come after me so that he explains these questions. Firstly, if he could explain to this House and to the people of Fiji the reason for the delay in delivery and how this could be resolved. How can he guarantee that qualified carpenters will be engaged? How can he guarantee that the structure built will be strong enough to withstand a cyclone? And if he can explain to us all, who will pay the carpenters' wages for single mothers and victims of disability.

Madam Speaker, the other concerns in these villages include; the need for improved drinking water, electricity, climate change adaptation projects, evacuation centres, small micro-business grants and road access. Surprisingly, these very things were referred to in His Excellency's Address and the FijiFirst Government has been boastful about it.

We know we have a human right to safe drinking water. In these rural villages, the average waiting time is five years, and all requests are now stacked at the Provincial Administrator's Office in Savusavu or at the Honourable Minister's Office. There is a very clear disconnection somewhere, and I hope that the Honourable Minister is not using the money budgetted for drinking water for other projects.

At Vivili Village, Madam Speaker, they said that when no answer from the Ministry came, they complained to the Honourable Minister on his last visit who promised to help them and he did because five days later, two water tanks of 10,000 litres each were delivered. However, these two tanks are still sitting on the hill there because the Ministry responsible has failed to turn up with the remaining material and build it. So I sincerely beg the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure to explain to this House and to the people of Fiji, why is it that two water tanks are sitting unutilised at Vivili Village.

Madam Speaker, I also beg the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure to explain to this House and to the people of Fiji the delay in improving the water supply for Nacavanadi Village and Nagigi Village. If the Honourable Minister cares to look at his file and consult with the Provincial Administrator Cakaudrove, he will see that their requests are there, and also that the survey has been conducted but it is the implementation that is needed.

Madam Speaker, I beg the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure to also explain to this House and to the people of Fiji of the delay in assistance in improving the water supplies in the villages of Navetau, Wailevu, Muana, Naqaravutu, Natewa, Vusa, Dawa, Karoko, Lumuboso, Koroivonu, Kanakana and Nawi. These other villages are situated in the *vanua* of Natewa, Tunuloa and Cakaudrove. I visited these villages in June before the Budget session. I raised their issue here, the same plea to the Government, I wrote a letter to the Honourable Minister on 12th July, 2016 which was hand-delivered on 13th July, 2016 but the Honourable Minister did not even acknowledge my letter.

During this visit, I went around and visited these villages again to see if something has happened - nothing. At Kanakana Village, I was told they went up again two weeks ago to the Provincial Administrator and this time, citing two cases of typhoid to support their case, still the answer was "no". So what they did, they collected themselves \$5,000 to buy their own material.

Madam Speaker, at the floor of the *Turaga-ni-Koro*'s residence at Kanakana, the *Turaga-ni-Koro* looked up to me, looked up to the ceiling and down at the floor and then he said to me, "*a Matanitu qo, Niko sa rui Matanitu daidai*" which means "this Government is a lying Government".

Madam Speaker, on electricity, I beg the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure to look at the plight of the villagers of Vusasivo, Karoko and Bagasau on the fate of their solar water power. First, they were told they will buy the units, then they were told they will only rent it, and they paid an enormous amount and it appears that there is some middlemen there who is making money.

Madam Speaker, I am only bringing this up because I wrote to the Honourable Minister on 12th July, 2016 and I hand-delivered my letter to his office on 13th July, 2016, copied of course to the Provincial Administrator in Savusavu, but there was no reply. So, the Honourable Minister did not even acknowledge my letter. I also wrote to the Honourable Minister on the complaints of the delay in hydro at Muana Village, as well as the need to increase capacity in Buca Village and again, there was no reply.

Madam Speaker, during the last Parliament session, I complained to this House of two climate adaptation projects at Karoko Village and Kanakana Village but nothing has been done at Kanakana Village, despite the Honourable Minister for Disaster Management saying that they will have a two-stage project. Accordingly, I want to ask him, when will this happen?

Madam Speaker, allow me to bring to this House the plight of poor Government Field Officers, who work in rural areas. At Buca Village, I met a Forestry Officer who came out of the bus and I asked him, "Where is your vehicle?" He said, for the Forestry Department, there is one very old vehicle to cover the forests from Wainunu to Savusavu to Natewa Peninsula and to Saqani forests - only one. Then I met an employee of the DO's Office at Tukavesi, again, still they are sharing a vehicle with another DO's Office at Saqani, which is 150 miles away. So I ask the Honourable Minister to check why, on record, there is a vehicle allocated for Tukavesi but you cannot find anything there.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Has always been like that.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, why are you driving all these flashy cars? Can you not give it to them? Can you not catch the bus? I catch the bus in the morning when I come here, it makes me feel close to the people.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I do that all the time! I catch the bus. Do you catch the bus? Flashy cars and then you covered it again, so that the people outside do not see you.

Madam Speaker, on environment, there is a total lack of genuine environment stewardship with this Government. The Government has failed to uphold the right of every citizen. The Constitution says, "Every citizen has a right to clean natural environment." Despite this, the Government's global rhetoric and laudable propaganda that it champions the environment overseas, but nothing has been done at local level. It really is a scam when you critically analyse the working of the Ministry that has been mandated to protect, sustainably manage and conserve our natural resources. The Honourable Minister himself does not know the issues of priority in this critical sector.

We already have a stringent environmental law under the Environment Management Act 2005 that directs an Environment Council to sit quarterly and I am making the serious charge against the Honourable Minister because I know as a fact that this important Council has not sat in the last two years. I am demanding an explanation from the Honourable Minister to tell us, why? Why? What is happening? Why are you not having this Council? They should sack you.

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

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament; I appreciate once again this opportunity of responding to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Fiji's gracious speech in the opening of Parliament on Monday, 12th September, 2016.

Madam Speaker, as His Excellency has alluded, we are coming towards the halfway point of our four years of democratic journey. As I speak, we have gone past the halfway point and are continuing on our third year of the journey.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency the President has reminded this august House of the following:

- It is time we take stock of our progress and our performances, looking back from the time we started and to where we are now, the halfway point.
- It is also a time of reflection for both sides of the House and every Member of Parliament to see how we have progressed as a Parliament and as a nation as a whole.”

Madam Speaker, upon taking stock of the past two years of this democratic journey, I believe that we all need to go back to the drawing board and re-strategise our way forward for the next two years before the first term of four years comes to an end.

Madam Speaker, the excuse of being a young democracy is no longer valid. This august House has a key role to play and as a central institution of democracy, we all must set the pace and send out the right signal to the people out there who endorse our being here.

Madam Speaker, I am convinced that there is strength in unity. This reminds me of the Public Employees Union logo, as we drive up the Edinburgh Road from the Walu Bay end in the 1980s and 1990s and it was clearly spelt out for everyone to see and read the phrase of their vision, 'United We Stand Divided We Fall'.

As the elected body that represents society in all its diversity, Parliament has a unique responsibility of reconciling the conflicting interests and expectations of different groups and communities through the democratic means of dialogue and compromise.

Madam Speaker, it was very enlightening to hear the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in opening the 71st Annual Debate of the UN General Assembly Meeting with a strong message. He said, "...after 10 years as the top UN Official, he is more convinced than ever that we have the power to end war, poverty and persecution." He continues to say; "We have the means to prevent conflict. We have the potential to close the gap between the rich and poor, and to make rights real in people's lives."

Madam Speaker, we as Members of Parliament are reminded of the templates of a democratic Parliament. The roles are:

- Representative – an elected parliament that is socially and politically representative of the diversity of people and ensuring equal opportunity and protection for all;
- Being transparent – a parliament that is open to the people and transparent in the conduct of its business;
- Accessible – the involvement of the public, including civil society and other people's movement in the work of parliament; and

- Accountable – as Members of Parliament, we are accountable to the electorates for our performance in office and for the integrity of our conduct.

Madam Speaker, as quoted by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Fiji in referring to the former President, His Excellency Ratu Epeli Nailatikau's 2015 Opening of Parliament speech, I quote:

“I urge you all to think beyond your parochial interests of ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status or wherever you come from in Fiji. And to join hands to work together to move our beloved nation forward.”

Madam Speaker, His Excellency the President has put out a challenge for this august House to work even harder in the two years ahead of us. We should be reflecting on how we can improve our quality of service to the people of this beloved nation.

I would like to quote from the phrase of Abraham Lincoln when he defines the word democracy', and I quote; “Democracy is a government, of the people, by the people and for the people.” In our context, the people we call 'the Fijians'.

Madam Speaker, Fiji's economy has made a turnaround since 2010 under the Government's strong commitment to reforms. Since then, Fiji started to experience sustainable economic growth in comparison to its post-independent economic history, averaging 3.3 percent annually or nearly four times the average growth from 2000 to 2009. Madam Speaker, the trend continued to improve after the successful National Elections and the return to democracy in 2014, which greatly boosted investors' sentiments up until today.

Madam Speaker, as we understand the fact that it is always a challenge for any government to create an environment conducive to greater private sector involvement in order to sustain its growth, more inclusive in order to benefit all sectors of society. To achieve inclusive growth, we will need to maintain an environment of political stability and improve its policy certainty and this is currently what the Government of the day is undertaking.

Madam Speaker, *TC Winston* did not leave the Fiji economy unscathed. The disaster was estimated to have caused damages valued at F\$2.85 billion, equal to almost 30 percent of GDP. Forecasts of GDP growth in 2016 have declined as a result. However, the 2016-2017 Budget released in June includes few significant policy changes, owing to a decision to change the fiscal year from January to December, to July to June.

There were some worthwhile initiatives put in place, such as 300 percent tax deduction on wages of persons of disability employed for a period of three years, which is available to employers and designed to create employment opportunities among the group. Another worthwhile initiative is the tax increase on sugar sweetened drinks which will help Fiji to reduce incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). The water resources tax levied on companies such as Fiji Water has also been increased.

Madam Speaker, notwithstanding these challenges and risks, the Fiji economy is in good position. Confidence has returned, following years of uncertainty that bogged down the nation in the past. The increase in the level of private sector investment not seen in past decades has pointed towards an economic recovery and growth. Fiji has a lot to look forward to in the coming years.

Madam Speaker, at the beginning of the year, the whole of Fiji experienced the strongest ever natural disaster to hit parts of the country, the Category 5 *TC Winston* which claimed 44 lives. *TC Winston* was dubbed as the strongest ever experienced in the Southern Hemisphere. Madam Speaker, the outcome

of *TC Winston* has left thousands of people homeless and the experience has brought about many lessons learnt for every Fijian.

Madam Speaker, climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, as we continue to work towards our development strategies and at the same time respect the natural environment. It is for our benefit that we understand the effect of climate change, as well as the changing climatic pattern, both in the Pacific region and the world, and how we respond to it.

There has been a body of scientific evidence linking the occurrences of El Nino with increasing wind shear and strengthening of tropical cyclones in the region. Ultimately, this El Nino will also exert some influence on the number of tropical cyclones that the region will experience. In response, there is an urgent need for societal action to continue to develop coherent mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Madam Speaker, the experiences we went through during *TC Winston* and the above scenario have indicated to us that every citizen of this country must not sit on their laurel, it is time we improve our situation in securing our infrastructures and equipping ourselves well for every type of extreme weather patterns. This is the message of the hour. The weather pattern is now unpredictable; the cyclone season is not the same anymore. All Fijians must be vigilant and prepare well for what is ahead of us.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency the President also highlighted the review of the United Nations Electronic Communications Convention by the responsible Standing Committee on International Treaties and Conventions. The State Parties to this Convention, reaffirming their belief that international trade on the basis of equality and mutual benefit is an important element in promoting friendly nations among States:

- Noting that the increased use of electronic communications improve the efficiency of commercial activities, enhancing trade connections and allow new access opportunities for previously remote parties and markets, thus playing a fundamental role in promoting trade and economic development, both domestically and internationally.
- Considering that problems created by uncertainty as to the legal value of the use of electronic communications in international contractors constitute an obstacle to international trade.
- Desiring to provide a common solution to remove legal obstacle to the use of electronic communications in a manner acceptable to States with different legal, social and economic systems.

Madam Speaker, I would like to draw from some lessons learnt from the win in Rio. I would like to view it from the leadership and teamwork perspective. The Coach and his management team showed excellent leadership and teamwork all the way. Similarly, the Captain displayed excellent leadership. This was an important and binding factor in the team. In response to the leadership at the different levels, the team members gave their all and the outcome of which was the gold.

Similarly, the presence of our nation's leader, the Honourable Prime Minister, in Rio was an added boost and a further motivator for our Sevens gladiators to go for gold. This is not a new concept but something that was practised in the past by sending a high Chief to be part of the team when they play their role as team motivators.

Madam Speaker, good leadership and teamwork produce desirable results, as in the case of Rio. To get gold, all the different parts of the team are important and they have specific tasks or responsibilities to carry out, which they did and we are all grateful for that.

Madam Speaker, the win in Rio has brought about unity and togetherness in Fiji. It cuts across all barriers and the country was enveloped with a positive energy, fun and patriotism at its highest.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I strongly feel that we, in our different capacities, need to rise above challenges, above our political affiliation, gender, ethnicity and religious beliefs to be conduits of unity, goodness, wisdom, positive energy and blessings in our lovely nation.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence and may God bless Fiji.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister and fellow Cabinet Ministers, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Members of Parliament, members of the public in the gallery and those watching or listening from the comforts of their home or through the internet; a very good afternoon to you all.

Madam Speaker, first and foremost, may I take this opportunity to publicly thank the Honourable Prime Minister for allowing me to move closer to serving all Fijians by appointing me as the Assistant Minister of Health and Medical Services. I am certain that with the passion and drive my line Minister possesses, together we will be able to address the issues facing our health systems.

In his speech at the occasion of the opening of the 2016-2017 Session of Parliament, His Excellency the President said, and I quote:

“My Government is improving access to such necessities as health-care and legal services, and connecting more people to electricity, water and telecommunications.”

Madam Speaker, Goals 1-6 of the UN's Sustainable Development Programme directly address these necessities. They also provide key issues in global public health, poverty, hunger and food securities, health, education, gender equality, women's empowerment and water and sanitation. These Goals hope to lessen the burden of disease and inequality faced by developing countries, and lead to a healthier future.

Madam Speaker, in appointing me as the new Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services, the Honourable Prime Minister made specific reference to focussing on the responsibilities of public health. The focus of public health intervention is to improve health and quality of life through prevention and treatment of diseases and other physical and mental conditions. This is done through the surveillance to detect disease outbreaks, monitoring of health indicators to identify trends and patterns of ill-health, regulation and legislation to enforce standards and safeguards, and efforts to promote healthy behaviour and lifestyles. Examples of common public health measures include promotion of hand washing, breastfeeding, delivery of vaccinations and the distribution of condoms to control the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

Modern public health practices require multi-disciplinary teams of public health workers and professionals, including physicians specialising in public health, community medicine/infectious disease psychologists, epidemiologists, biostatisticians, medical assistants or assistant medical officers, public health nurses, midwives, medical micro-biologists, environmental health officers, public health inspectors, pharmacists, dentists, dieticians and nutritionists, veterinarians, public health engineers, public health lawyers, sociologists, community development workers, communication experts, computer scientists and others.

Public health plays an important role in disease prevention efforts in both the developing world and in developing countries, through local health systems and non-governmental organisations. Public

health programmes providing vaccinations have made great strides in promoting health. We have succeeded in eradicating small pox, a disease that plagued humanity for thousands of years.

In 1988, the number of cases of polio globally was estimated to be 350,000. By 2015, that number had fallen by more than 99 percent to just 74 reported cases. Our own Western Pacific Region was declared to be free of the scourge of polio almost 16 years ago on the 29 October, 2000. Those achievements, which are largely due to the continued efforts of public health professionals, are impressive – but the gains are also fragile. It has been estimated that failure to eradicate polio from a few remaining strongholds could result in as many as 200,000 new cases every year, within 10 years globally.

Madam Speaker, allow me to expand on our programmes, successes, challenges and the way forward. There are several achievements by the Public Health Division that are registered in the past years' Annual Report and I will mention a few. A major focus of public health in Fiji is focussed on reducing the prevalence of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs), such as Diabetes, Cardio Vascular Diseases and Heart Disease that causes approximately 80 percent of deaths in Fiji. Our efforts to control the risk factors of NCDs, such tobacco use, unhealthy diet and harmful use of alcohol through taxation methods is commended by the World Health Federation. A major programme has been our strong tobacco control regulations and enforcement that has led to a reduction in smoking rates and the reduction in the incidents of lung cancer, over a decade.

Our dedication to tobacco control has been rewarded with an award received from the World Health Organisation in recognition of our commitment during the World Health Day. Also in NCD, Mental Health is a major Programme that achieved the training over 200 health staff in Mental Health gap, at a primary health care level. This was expanded to include psychological first aid. This training became very useful after the *TC Winston* disaster with communities of affected populations having access to mental health screenings.

In 2015, policies for cervical cancer screening and family planning focus also on increasing staff capacity in addition to providing services. Development of major innovative guidelines from maternal health, such as no violence against women and builds, clinical guideline for health care workers in Fiji, teenage pregnancy charts and hand fliers, mother safe hospital and the new clinical practice guideline, et cetera, is expected to improve the standard of care for our expectant mothers.

The continued training of our primary health care staff on an integrated management of childhood illnesses and childhood immunisation programmes are our strongest public health activities, to prevent severe illness and death from children in this country. It is the immunisation or vaccination of diseases that we do not see in polio, tetanus and since the introduction of vaccines, seen a much reduction in pneumonia, meningitis and diarrhoea in children that commonly cause death or disability.

Recent developments in HIV AIDS programme saw the expansion of basic testing facilities outside of Suva with a new testing strategy and introduction of new technology, to assist AIDS patient during drug treatment. Our communicable disease teams continue to be vigilant in the national, regional and global surveillance of emerging infectious diseases and work closely with the border agencies to prepare contingency plans. The plans or operations of the group were well executed with our returning Officers from Liberia, which was at the centre of the Ebola Virus epidemic.

Environment Health continues to grow in strength and capacity with the completion, submission of the completed Health Protection Bill and the Health Quarantine Bill. The advent of dengue, Chikungunya and Zika predicated a national response against mosquitos in the middle of the year, which saw the participation of Government departments, private sector, CSOs, NGOs and even FBOs in the "Fight the Bite Campaign" that had major impact on major breeding sites and possibly averting epidemics of the Chikungunya and Zika Virus.

There are many challenges to the implementation of Public Health Programmes but mainly the inequitable allocation of resources, for example, transport, et cetera, towards these programmes that focus on prevention of disease in the community. Secondly, a major challenge is at individual level to encourage behaviour change towards wellness.

A way forward for the Ministry of Health and Medical Services is recognising the fact that many factors have caused infirmity and disease in individuals outside the scope of health, but rather lying in the domains of other sectors such as social determinants, for example, poverty, housing standards, water distribution, sanitation. This essentially means advocating for a multi-sectoral approach with health in all policies which includes strengthening primary prevention that addresses issues around delays in reaching care and receiving care, that involves complete health systems which has adequate information systems, infrastructure, human resources and support services in all its interventions, consider disability, the elderly and the vulnerable, sections of the community. We must remain ever vigilant.

Some core functions of public health programmes include:

- Providing leadership on matters critical to health and engaging in partnerships where joint action is needed.
- Shaping a research agenda, in stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge.
- Setting norms and standards and promoting and monitoring their implementation.
- Articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options and monitoring health situation and assessing health trends.

In turn, these programmes can:

- Serve as an early warning system for impending public health emergencies;
- Document the impact of an intervention or track progress towards specific goals;
- Monitor and clarify the epidemiology of health problems, allow priorities to be set, and inform health policies and strategies; and
- diagnose, investigate and monitor health problems and health hazards in the community.

Public health surveillance has led to the identification and prioritization of many public health issues facing the world today, including HIV/AIDS, diabetes, water-borne diseases and antibiotic resistance leading to the re-emergence of infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis. The World Health Organisation reports that at least 220 million people worldwide suffer from diabetes. Its incidence is increasing so rapidly, it is projected that the number of deaths from diabetes will double by the year 2030.

The fact that Type 2 Diabetes, a largely preventable disorder, has reached epidemic proportion is a public health humiliation. Many health problems are due to maladaptive personal behaviours. From an evolutionary psychology perspective, overconsumption of novel substances that are harmful is due to the activation of an evolved reward system for substances, such as drugs, tobacco, alcohol, refined salt, fat and carbohydrates. New technologies such as modern transportation also cause reduced physical activity.

Research has found that behaviour is more effectively changed by taking evolutionary motivations into consideration instead of only presenting information about health effects. Thus, the increased use of soap and hand-washing to prevent diarrhoea is much more effectively promoted if its lack of use is associated with the emotion of disgust. Disgust is an evolved system for avoiding contact with substances that spread infectious diseases.

The marketing industry has long known the importance of associating products with high status and attractiveness to others. Conversely, it has been argued that emphasising the harmful and undesirable effects of tobacco smoking on other persons and imposing bans in public places have been particularly effective in reducing tobacco smoking.

As well as seeking to improve population health through the implementation of specific population-level intervention, public health contributes to medical care by identifying and assessing population needs for health care services, including:

- Assessing current services and evaluating whether they are meeting the objectives of health care systems.
- Ascertaining requirements as expressed by health professional, the public and other stakeholders.
- Identifying the most appropriate interventions.
- Considering the effect on resources for proposed interventions and assessing their cost-effectiveness.
- Support decision-making in health care and planning health services, including any necessary changes.
- Informing, educating and empowering people about health issues.

Madam Speaker, many Public Health Programmes are increasingly dedicating attention and resources to the issue of obesity, with the objective to address the underlying causes, including healthy diet and physical exercises. Ours should be no different.

Madam Speaker, to improve public health, our important strategy is to promote modern medicine and scientific neutrality to drive the Public Health Policy and Campaign. The history of public health care clearly shows the global effort to improve the health care for all. However, in modern-day medicine, real measurable change has not been clearly seen and critics argue that this lack of improvement is due to ineffective methods that are being implemented.

There is a great disparity in access to health care and public health initiatives between developed nations and developing nations. Public health measures may not generally be considered "health care" in the stricter sense, for example, mandating the use of seat belts in cars can save countless lives and contribute to the health of a population, but typically money spent enforcing this rule would not count as money spent on health care.

Large parts of the developing world remain plagued by largely preventable or treatable infectious diseases and poor maternal and child health, exacerbated by malnutrition and poverty. The World Health Organisation reports a lack of exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life contributes to over a million avoidable child deaths each year.

The growing field of population health has broadened the focus of public health from individual behaviours and risk factors to population-level issues, such as inequality, poverty and education. Modern public health is concerned with addressing determinants of health across a population. There is recognition that our health is affected by many factors, including where we live, genetics, our income, our educational status and our social relationships. The poorest generally suffer the worst health, but even the middle classes will generally have worst health outcomes than those of a higher social stratum. The new public health advocates for population-based policies that improve health in an equitable manner.

Before I conclude, Madam Speaker, I wish to respond to comments made by Honourable Opposition Members:

1. The doctor to people ratio are only estimates and are very vague, for instance, Ono-i-Lau has one doctor covering some three to four hundred people and because of the geographical make-up of our country.
2. Continued amputation of limbs due to NCDs.

Unfortunately they come to seek medical assistance when it is too far developed. There is continued publicity for the early detection of all diseases, both NCDs and CDs and may I remind you all that everything begins at home.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I plead with the Honourable Members of this House to take the bold step and harvest the wellness within you. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Viam Pillay.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Members of the Parliament; I wish to say 'thank you' to His Excellency the President for his kind words. His speech has highlighted the Government's planned work for the year 2016-2017.

Madam Speaker, I wish to speak on *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, which was the strongest cyclone to hit Fiji and the strongest cyclone in the Southern Hemisphere as well. *TC Winston* is the worst storm recorded in the Southern Hemisphere. It left 44 people dead in Fiji and I once again convey my sympathy to those families.

Madam Speaker, this cyclone left thousands of people homeless, without water, electricity, clothing and food. Damages to food crops and vegetation, water storage, infrastructure, soil erosion and loss of property and other belongings are estimated to be over \$3 billion.

Throughout Fiji, a total of 40,000 homes were damaged or destroyed. The Western Division accounted for the majority of damage with 6,954 homes destroyed and 11,254 damaged. This left approximately 131,000 people in need of immediate shelter assistance.

In addition, over 229 schools were severely damaged or destroyed. The total damage from the storm amounted to an estimated \$2.98 billion. However, despite the massive damage caused by *TC Winston*, the main tourism sector was largely spared.

TC Winston's devastating impact across Fiji rendered tens of thousands homeless. Over 134 schools were also used for evacuation centres. This prompted a major international humanitarian response with many left without water, food and other basic needs. Children, I must say, who experienced

this disaster will never forget this day for the rest of their lives. Some stories we heard, children even ran from house to house three to four times as the wind tore up buildings, leaving nothing behind.

Madam Speaker, the cyclone is over and it is now left to us to rebuild our lives and to continue to survive. Rebuilding is a not whipped out of thin air, it takes time and sweat, and challenges to overcome obstacles. It is a process that will take time and sacrifices. This is the first time in Fiji where 40,000 homes were damaged or destroyed, with schools, infrastructure and land degradation. We should understand that this is the first time ever for such a disaster to hit us and we should be thankful for the support given by the Government and our friends in stabilizing the country before the assessing and rebuilding process came into effect.

Madam Speaker, let me share my experience. I am a sugarcane farmer from Ba. Ba was one of the most damaged place that *TC Winston* passed through. Schools and homes were blown to pieces. It all came at once - rain, wind and flood. We were left at God's Mercy.

My home with many many others were torn to pieces, leaving people homeless and only the wet clothes which people had on was the only worldly possession at that time. Families were taken to evacuation centres nearby. Their homes and all their belongings were gone with the wind. Farms like any other were all damaged to the point that nothing could be eaten or sold.

I walked on foot from community to community as all means of transportation was not possible. I noticed the damaged done was at a very high cost. Electrical pole lines were all down on the ground, and cables all cut off. There were landslides and parts of roads missing, and broken crossings. Trees were left uprooted and low-lying areas filled with water, and most livestock had gone missing or dead. We should all know that it was not only the sugar industry that was damaged but the whole agriculture sector too was severely ruined.

Communication was down and it was hard to know what was happening in the next community and neighbours. The only way was to take yourself out and start walking to places to see if the community at large were safe and well.

Madam Speaker, I have lived through dozens of cyclones and hurricanes, *TC Winston* I can say was the toughest I had gone through. Never in my life have I experienced such wind of terror and destruction. All I thought of was the lives of people in my community and in all affected areas.

Water shortage and sanitation was a big problem, together with the worry of airborne diseases and the potential outbreaks of viruses carried by mosquitoes which could further devastate the nation with dirty stagnant water remaining in many areas.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Attorney-General, Honourable Ministers and Members of Fiji First Party for taking time to visit the communities and observe and experience firsthand what the people of Ba and other affected areas were facing. With their help, communities were able to get back on their feet and start rebuilding their homes, schools, shops, farms and businesses.

Over 23,000 families who were registered under the Poverty Benefit Scheme received \$600 for the next three months and 3,257 families registered under the Health Care Protection Scheme received \$300. This shows the FijiFirst Government's commitment in looking after its citizens as best as it can. FijiFirst is committed to an inclusive society where everyone is equal just like everyone is equal in the eyes of God, regardless of status, class, or your socio-economic background. Fiji is for all Fijians and I am proud to be a Fijian. Only your hard work and perseverance can make you a story of success if you believe in your goals and stay focused.

Government and international donors came in with great assistance providing our people with relief and rehabilitation work. The humanitarian support given will always be cherished in people's hearts from our nearby island neighbours to far flung countries who came to people's aid, their generosity and commitment has moved them and they will forever be grateful.

Today, communities are still rebuilding their homes, step by step. I know many out there have yet to receive their materials for building, but we ourselves need to take the time and initiative to learn on how to improve our building standards. I know we live in the islands and sometimes we do not take things seriously, however we must understand the climate change is real and we are more likely to face more natural disasters than ever before. It is always a wise idea to build you house upon the rock and not upon the sand.

Madam Speaker, today I can say our communities have a closer bond than before. We are now stronger than before. This cyclone has brought unity within the community, working together hand in hand, and the Government has introduced initiatives to rebuilding our country and its number one priority is to rebuild Fiji to "Build Back Better", better than before and stronger than before.

Public infrastructure and houses are built to proper standards to withstand future cyclones. I am also proud of Nukuloa College in Ba, despite huge damages the community rebuild the school with Government assistance. The school is almost back to normal classes and also proudly won the under 19 secondary school IDC. Congratulations!

Madam Speaker, I want to personally, thank the Government for introducing initiatives such as Help for Homes initiative and Adopt a School initiative. I know this will take time as this has affected Fiji in ways too hard to explain. You need to see it with your eyes to believe the impact of *TC Winston*. The Honourable Prime Minister has travelled throughout the country visiting and listening to ordinary Fijians about what they need in order to get back on their feet. He has responded to their need in especially places of top priority where almost everything was gone.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government is here, making new laws, new policies, to provide every citizen of this country, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, province or social status with a level playing field to create a common and equal citizenry, a common identity, everyone a Fijian, and the constitutional, political and social framework for every citizen, to move forward together as like any other democratic nation has done, and which every county is entitled to do. We must pride ourselves with the principles of fairness and equal suffrage.

Madam Speaker, we must all remember, that we all came from dust and one day shall return to dust and all you have done on earth shall be revealed on the day we meet our creator. He has entrusted us to plough and till the land, to work, live and enjoy life with the will and the compassion to help anyone in need. We must also remember that this comes with responsibilities to plan, create and manage whatever we have for the benefit of all.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, everyone wants to be happy in life. We all want to live a perfect life. We want that great job or a successful business. We want to be married to Mr. Right or Miss Perfect. We want to have great kids. We want to have friends that stick by us come rain or shine. We want to be able to have all the material things life has to offer and have all our problems just disappear.

Madam Speaker, everyone wishes for good life which may be at different levels. One person may define a good life one way and another may describe it another way. For one person a good life may be just having three meals a day and a roof over their head, for another it may be having a huge mansion and a couple of million dollars in the bank.

Madam Speaker, there are different levels and meanings to what a good life is but whatever your definition of it, there is perhaps one thing that you may have in common with many other people. You might want the good life stress free. You would like to have it without having to work so hard or struggle so much for it. That is a normal human expectation. No one likes to struggle through life.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, that is also what may be stopping people from having that great life. The thought of all that work, all that planning, overcoming hurdles and resistance is enough to make a lot of people give up before they even start. It can all seem too overwhelming and for many, it all just does not seem to be worth it. It is like being drained of energy just at the thought of running a marathon. Before you are even at the starting line the thought of all that running just scares you and tires you so much mentally, you just decide not to go for it. It is just too hard.

Madam Speaker, our lives are full of ups and downs. The cyclone has come and gone. A lot of assistance has come in. The final important thing is for each individual to organize things well, stand up and start living as usual. God gives us the courage and we all can do it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Cabinet Ministers and fellow Honourable Members of Parliament; I stand to speak in response to His Excellency's statement. I will engage on the subject of infrastructure, that being my Opposition designated portfolio, whilst also speaking on other focus areas.

I begin by echoing similar sentiments shared by many in this august House and in Fiji and beyond, on the joys of winning our first Olympic gold in Rio. No doubt, the boys have become icons and role models immediately for our children, our youth, and even to our older generation in displaying through their victory, that it is possible to rise above your positions of difficulties and personal circumstances, whatever they may be.

The lessons we learnt include the assurances that nothing is impossible if you set your dreams and aspire to work hard and achieve them through perseverance, honesty, diligence and above all, as Captain Courageous has always so eloquently highlighted; through the acknowledgment of the existence of a higher power and embracing that it is only possible through Christ, whom we need to rely on daily to lead us through the storms of life.

Madam Speaker, I have followed with concern the tension between Fiji and Papua New Guinea, and the threatening trade war that may very well be expensive for us. I have also noted the comments by the Honourable Minister for Trade yesterday on this matter. I have this to say though, there could be genuine concerns on both sides but as Professor Jayarama of the Fiji National University recently said, and I quote: "We require statesmen like decisions on the part of our leaders to resolve this issue."

This is not the first and will not be the last trade disagreements we have with our Pacific brothers. We had one with Vanuatu in 2012, and now with PNG, and this is at the doorstep of our MSGTA3 which is expected to come into effect in January next year to not only support commodity trade, but also trade in services, labour mobility and cross border investments.

Many of our people are in PNG now, as well as in other parts of the region, earning and making a living and remitting money back home to Fiji for their families. They rely on our shrewdness as leaders, to lead with wisdom and responsibility, not to hurt their livelihood in their temporary places of residence.

Just look at the GPH and the beautiful Pearl Resort! These are great examples of regional co-operation. I trust we will handle this matter with PNG amicably.

Madam Speaker, I now wish to focus on the ongoing investigations occurring at the Land Transport Authority (LTA). Whilst I totally applaud the intent behind it, however, I reiterate the need for transparency in this process as I had earlier last year sought the Honourable Minister's allowance that the Opposition also has access to the investigation report conducted through the Office of the Attorney-General. This remains important to allow us to validate the changes that have since occurred, changes that were made to the LTA Board and I understand that the LTA CEO is proceeding on early retirement. Government needs to be able to assure us that these actions occurring are for the betterment of the LTA in delivering its core services, for we must be reminded that secrecy in the long run never does anyone any good.

Madam Speaker, there remain an alarming number of road accidents occurring, many emanating from speeding and the use of alcohol by drivers and lately, road rage. These incidents point to a breakdown in drivers' social behaviour and respect for the rule of law. It points to basic issues, like discipline and patience, things that the LTA perhaps may not easily detect, but need to monitor and manage. The media has reported on the implementation of hidden cameras along our roads. There are international standards on such exercises for transparency purposes and for driver awareness. I urge that LTA assures that these provisions are clearly identified within the zones they are placed in.

Madam Speaker, still on LTA, I wish to seek Government's review of the current taxi permits freeze to ensure it is being distributed equitably. His Excellency spoke about the Government's development plans on infrastructure and I wish to address the much publicised severance of contract between the Fiji Roads Authority and MWH Global last week.

I do not wish to engage in defending MWH Global, Madam Speaker, but I have strong reservations on the deportation of the two expatriate workers, and I am particularly concerned with the uncertain bleak future of the local staff, whose lives and that of their families hang in the balance. I know that a significant number of these workers have already experienced this exercise of redundancy when the Department of National Roads was closed in 2012. The financial constraints and social problems they will again face can only be imagined by those who have yet to experience this ghastly exercise.

I note the assurance by the Honourable Minister for Transport and Infrastructure yesterday, Madam Speaker, that FRA will look at the possibility of absorbing the MWH workers. I implore Government to have human empathy and ensure that no one is left out. I intend to keenly monitor this matter, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the closure of MWH rings alarm bells on the validity of government reforms since 2006. I stand by my earlier calls that a performance audit be conducted at FRA, WAF and other entities to verify the success of the various reforms undertaken, especially the high costs associated with it. Unfortunately, the changes in the Standing Order now limits the freedom of members of the Public Account Committee to question the merits of Government policies on why budgets continue to inflate, as the cost of doing business in the last nine years has astronomically skyrocketed instead of reducing. The sad issue is, workforce numbers that were claimed to be high have decreased.

On that note, the Honourable Attorney-General who is not here unfortunately, earlier this week said that this side of the House is confused and politicising the high expenses Government has spent on expatriate consultancies, which is incorrect. Rather, our concerns remain firmly on not only the questionable high operational costs, but goes back to the formation of the FRA in 2012 through the MWH, first as Change Managers and later as Consultant Engineers for FRA, following the reform of the Department of National Roads. The whole arrangement remains ambiguous when our local people have

the professional ability and knowhow to provide the best technical advice and oversight for infrastructure development in Fiji. In fact, our Pacific neighbours are now benefitting from our highly trained and skilled engineers that are no longer recognised by Government, people like Paula Baleilevuka for example, now relied upon /by the ADB to establish the road networking structures in the Solomon Islands and now in Vanuatu.

The FRA has a lot of explaining to do to the people of this nation, Madam Speaker. The two major Suva bridges, for example, at Stinson Parade and Vatuwaqa are testimony to their ineffectiveness. One has been closed for four years and the other is now operating a single lane bailey bridge for three years. The Denarau Bridge, however, has been completed and so the basis of prioritising work is questionable. Never at a time in our country's history has such sad state of infrastructure remained derelict for such a long period of time, made worse by the same experiences of bridge closures occurring around the country. The whole thing begs a lot of questions on the quality of rehabilitation and periodic maintenance programmes being carried out by FRA and its consultants.

Let us stop pulling the wool over our taxpayers' eyes, Madam Speaker, all these excuses by FRA are lame. In fact, I am made to understand that since the dispute with MWH in recent months, an Australian lawyer is supposedly reviewing the contractual arrangement between the two entities which is costing taxpayers additional substantial amounts of money. Apart from the questionable cost of this exercise, why were the in-house lawyers at FRA and other legal entities in Fiji not utilised, including the Office of the Solicitor-General which is available for Government's disposal? These are taxpayers' money, Madam Speaker, and the current Government is only custodians of it for this period in Fiji's history but it does not mean they have been voted in to abuse it.

Madam Speaker, I made statements about my concerns with the deportation of the two expatriate consultants of the MWH. That is what any ethical, principled professional would do, in the face of such unwarranted actions. In fact, it questions the morality of our friendship and bilateral relations.

Following *TC Winston*, it was Australia and New Zealand that were the first to reach out and assist. Also, under the Overseas Seasonal Workers Scheme they have similarly reached out to accommodate this opportunity for our people. Political relations are like human emotions, they can become strained and can be severed. It would be senseless to damage unnecessarily our legal already fragile relations.

Madam Speaker, whatever the real reasons for the deportation, the incident is sure to raise further concerns and give, not only our domestic market but also investors and the international community a continued reason to be concerned, that despite our assurances that we have returned to democratic rule, everything in Fiji has not normalised and we have only used the excuses of freedom and genuine unity sparingly when the truth is, repressive laws remain in place. Previous activities we used to take for granted like social convergence and meetings, or even political participation as is enshrined in the 2013 Constitution's Bill of Rights and in the UNDHR remains an elusive dream. In fact, we now need permit for almost every meeting we wish to have, even in our own village settings and even for party church services on a Saturday.

The request of some Members from our side of the House to participate in *Tikina* meetings has even been affected. Our interest remains to assist *Tikina* members understand all the issues associated with new laws introduced by Government, like the Adoption Bill, Public Order Bill, Yaqona Bill, et cetera. Just yesterday, the SODELPA Party Leader and officials were scheduled for a visit to Navosa to meet Party members. Their permit for the meeting was not granted. It is now difficult to imagine a free society like Fiji used to have once. A failure to obtain a permit for public gatherings these days can mean an arrest as was experienced by a number of our political leaders in the last two weeks where they spent the weekend in police cells. Will all these occurrences, I am reminded by the words of Will Durant, an

American historian and philosopher, who put it so aptly when he said and I quote; “When liberty becomes licensed, dictatorship is near.”

Madam Speaker, let us hear our people and allow them to freely communicate and congregate. Globally, ethnical governments stay away from oppressive and regressive laws they know that teaches people and children in particular, to bolt aggression and hatred. If the Arab Springs is not a good enough example of revolt because of oppressive rule, then I do not know what else is left to imagine.

Madam Speaker, I wish to raise concern on the Maris Brothers Commercial Development Project at Flagstaff. I am aware that residents and businesses have objected to this development as it looks set to effect major traffic congestion for an already busy but narrow road. What will now emanate could very well be similar to the challenges now often faced at the Damodar City Complex in Raiwai and the Rups Complex in Wainibuku where road access to the main highways have caused road congestion for other traffic users. For the Flagstaff development, there are also concerns that pedestrian crossings have not been factored as part of the development to cater for the pedestrians, students and shoppers after the completion of the developments.

Madam Speaker, previously, regulations existed to guard against implementing developments of major highways or roads. In this instance, I urge the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure and Transport to relook at sustainable road management plans and not be intimidated by the close associations of some Government leaders who are old scholars of the school at *Kaunikuila*.

Madam Speaker, Government has sought to divest shares in certain Government owned entities including FEA. The landowners of Naitasiri have expressed interest to partner with Government in owning shares in FEA. I ask that Government engage us in this concept, if it is serious about developing our indigenous population, and improving the economic participation of our landowners in business entrepreneurship. The province has accommodated the nation faithfully with energy source for years. Give our resources owners something that can equate this goodwill.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency stated that we are midway into our next elections and the Office of the Supervisor of Elections is on track with its preparations. I wish to ask that Government assures the voters in the next general elections, that no deceptive advice be given to people on their voting days, unlike 2014 pre-polling challenges faced by many people in rural areas, who were under the impression that we would all participate in just one day polling. Subsequently, many missed voting as they were committed elsewhere when the pre-polling occurred.

I urge that the recommendation of the Multinational Observer Group about ballot papers be adopted. They even stated that it was unusual not to have party symbols or names of candidates to assist voters on who they could vote for. The system adopted expected people to remember the number of their candidates, as they walked into the voting booth. The question to ask is, Madam Speaker, is why was such a vague ballot paper was adopted? If you look at a ballot papers was around the world, you will hardly see any similar ballot paper to Fiji's. Ours in 2014, looked like to a cent- a-vote card.

Madam Speaker, on the review of certain laws in 2016-2017, I ask that the Rewa Dairy Restructure Decree 2010 be included amidst the laws to be reviewed. To date, disfranchised farmers remain embittered over the reforms and are still asking for their unit shares, and are awaiting the increased milk gate prices they were promised. To make matters worse for them, Section 23 and 24 of the Decree does not allow any decision made under this Decree to be challenged in court. Similarly, I also ask for the review of the Justice and Administration Decree of 2009.

In recent months, I was accused of leaving the Fiji Sports Council under allegations of financial mismanagement by Members of this August House through the media. You, Madam Speaker, would

be familiar on my departure from the Fiji Sports Council in 2007, given your membership on its Board during that period.

The Justice and Administration Decree 2009 disallow people like me and many others who face similar experiences to seek redress through the courts and clear our names. We suffer with our professional images defamed, our family and children endure the shame with much heartache and people still throw mud at us when they feel like it, irrespective of there being no proof to confirm the accusations. We deserve justice, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am inundated daily with petitions from students on the delays of their TELS and Toppers allowance payments by some, on the impractical demand of TELS. I ask Government to improve on these delays as a lot of students have committed to studying and many are totally reliant on these funds as their means of survival whilst they pursue their dreams.

There are many issues that students have brought to my attention, for example, suspensions for failure to meet certain GPA marks and not listening to students' explanation of extraordinary circumstances that they sometimes find themselves in. I ask that we be practical and review incidents on a case by case basis, especially if our end intentions is to improve the quality of education in our country and boost education access at tertiary level.

On that note, Madam Speaker, the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of TELS recently spoke publicly in the media on the probable charging of some students under the False Information Act for allegedly falsifying information on their loan applications. The operative word here is Loan Application.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- That is right, money that they use now that they will repay once they begin their career.

Most of these students who access TELS are from low income families and I implore Government to rethink of this regressive action by what the CEO TELS is proposing, to prosecute students for money they will repay at a later stage is not only loathsome, but is also inhumane.

Madam Speaker, I also Government to be more tolerant and find alternative ways of addressing those that may have manipulated in some way, the *TC Winston* cyclone relief assistance, and who are now fronting court on criminal charges under the False Information Act. I am not asking for Government to tolerate theft or fraud, but I am asking that cases be reviewed genuinely with social understanding rather than intent to prosecute.

Some of these people, who are trying to access assistance, are merely disadvantaged people who are genuinely in dire need of homes. It would be so sad if a villager, who has simply sought the comfort of a roof over his head and that of his children, goes to jail or pays a hefty fine he already cannot afford.

Madam Speaker to end my address, I wish to remind that the cyclone season begins next month and many families still live under tents in many places around the country. Similarly, some schools end up studying under the same conditions.

I note the delays in help but whilst I wish for urgent assistance for everyone highlighted, I urge attention be likewise given to the Naitasiri devastated areas, especially those that Government had visited.

Madam Speaker, our people need to know we genuinely care and that we are capable leaders. The SODELPA Members of Parliament without hesitation dug into our personal pockets and deducted

10 percent of our salary to donate to the Prime Minister Relief Appeal. We did not just grandstand to the people and not actually make the deductions. And so I ask, that we be responsible and walk the talk and not talk the talk or walk the walk. We cannot be flying everywhere first class, speaking to international audiences, when our own backyard remains in tatters.

I urge us again to prioritise. Being a leader demands much of us. Sometimes, it means unpleasant decisions need to be taken, but where we need to exercise wisdom, we need to do so.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. May God Bless Fiji and grant us all His peace.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. On that note, we will adjourn Parliament so that we can have our refreshment.

The Parliament is now adjourned and will resume at 4.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.00 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 4.39 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will resume from where we left of and I now invite the Honourable Salote Radrodro to have the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Honourable Speaker; the Honourable Prime Minister; Honourable Cabinets Ministers; the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Members and also a very good afternoon to those in the gallery.

Honourable Speaker, I rise and welcome this opportunity to respond to His Excellency the President's Address on Monday, 12th September, 2016 during the opening of the 2016-2017 Parliament Session.

Madam Speaker, with due respect to His Excellency the President, I say my response with deep concern and assertiveness from the perspectives of women, children and poverty alleviation, including those living with disabilities who His Excellency the President had referred to as the "vulnerable group", and also from the perspective of the Civil Service being one of the three pillars of democracy.

Madam Speaker, in his opening paragraph, His Excellency the President said that the outcome of the 2014 General Elections signalled our new democracy which is based on the genuine democratic principle of equal votes of equal value. Madam Speaker, I find this statement way out of line because we must always remember that election is only the first positive step in the democratic process. There is more to democracy than just elections. For genuine democracy, there is also the:

- 1) Constitution; and
- 2) Liberalism and that is the freedom, equality and dignity of the individual which equally play pivotal roles in the realisation of our democracy.

Madam Speaker, the realisation of our democracy depends a lot on the separation of powers and this is reflected in whether the three pillars of democracy and that is Parliament (this House), the Executive or the Civil Service and Judiciary are independent in their functions - in decision making and in carrying out their duties and almost importantly, how all these impact or affect people in their daily lives which ultimately determines the outcome of our democracy and that is whether it is really genuine or otherwise.

Madam Speaker, for example, is Parliament really independent when there is no legal counsel and whereby all legal matters and advice are sought from the Offices of the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General? How can the Civil Service be independent when Section 127(8) of the Constitution allows for the interference by giving the Minister a free hand in the day to day operation of the Ministry? Let me quote from Subsection 8 which states, and I quote:

"The permanent secretary of each ministry, with the agreement of the Minister responsible for the ministry, has the authority to determine all matters pertaining to the employment of all staff in the Ministry, including-

- 1) the terms and conditions of employment;
- 2) The salaries, benefits and allowances payable, in accordance with its budget as approved by Parliament: and

- 3) The total establishment or the total number of staff that are required to be appointed, in accordance with the budget approved by Parliament.”

According to that, Madam Speaker, it is clear that the Minister is part of Parliament, he is sitting in this House and also part of the Civil Service and as such, the separation of powers is automatically blurred by the very instrument that is supposed to uphold the separation of powers and that is the 2013 Constitution.

Blurred separation of powers will always be problematic and this had been reflected in the sudden resignation of Permanent Secretaries, the former Commissioner of Police and sudden resignation of senior civil servants. This, Madam Speaker, clearly demonstrates that the 2013 Constitution is undemocratic and as long as it is in place, “genuinely democracy” will always struggle to grow in Fiji. It is indeed sad, Madam Speaker, to hear His Excellency the President talk about genuine democracy when we all know that the 2013 Constitution was imposed upon the people and it is flawed.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the outcome of the 2014 General Elections and comments from the Government side saying that the people have spoken. Yes, indeed the people have spoken, but what is equally important is that the Government must consult the people who should and must be part of any discussion, decision making concerning their development and which must be sustainable for their future benefits and also for Fiji as a whole.

As it is now, the Government does not or selectively work with the people. We have listened to what Honourable Nawaikula have shared with us. For genuine democracy as alluded to by His Excellency the President, the Government must take the 2013 Constitution to the people. Let the people decide because as His Excellency the President said, “it is to the people we owe our allegiance as Members of Parliament and whose interest we have solemnly sworn to uphold.” So why is the Government refusing to consult the people on the 2013 Constitution? In not doing so, whose interest are they protecting?

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the suspension of Opposition Members – the Honourable Ratu Naiqama and Honourable Tupou Draunidalo, were very harsh, inhumane and of great injustice and marked a very big blow and setback for any progress towards genuine democracy, freedom and human rights in Fiji. Such harsh punishment was not in accordance with the Standing Orders and as such, totally defeated the spirit and principles of democracy. Their suspension also took away the people’s right to be represented in Parliament. All these, Madam Speaker, demonstrate that democracy in Fiji is a sham.

Madam Speaker, we acknowledge the efforts by the Honourable Prime Minister and his Cabinet in visiting our various communities around the country under the banner of service delivery. But there are always some communities that are being left behind or poorly serviced by Government agencies for some reasons or other. In such cases, Madam Speaker, people bring their issues or concerns directly to Members of Parliament, especially to the Opposition through a petition and whereby the matter is taken to the relevant Standing Committee for public consultation.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the latest amendment of Standing Order 37(5) on submission of petitions which now requires a 40 percent vote has taken away that right from the people. And also the amendment of Standing Order 109(d) which changed the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee to be a Member from the Government side, and the new insertion and I quote:

“The Committee must only examine how public money has been dealt with and accounted for in accordance with the written law and must not examine the merits of the underlying policy that informs public spending”

Madam Speaker, with that in place, it renders the Public Accounts Committee a toothless tiger because that totally removed the scrutiny role of the Opposition and Public Accounts Committee to keep Government in check, to ensure that Government is honest in its dealings so as to promote good governance through transparent, accountable and effective policies, programmes, systems and processes in the Civil Service and also that of Government statutory bodies.

Madam Speaker, how independent is the Judiciary? Is our judicial system unfettered and unbiased where the rule of law is without prejudice? Do the relevant laws support freedom of political expression, freedom of speech? Is our human rights restored and protected?

Madam Speaker, I share an experience as I queued up at the cashier at MH Superfresh, a gentleman came, tapped me on the shoulder and shared with me his frustration on the court decision about a decision that was delivered in one of the Honourable Members court cases. He even went on further to say that he voted for FijiFirst in the last Elections and he regretted that.

Madam Speaker, the recent deportation of two MWH Global staff and declared a persona non grata speaks volumes of this new brand of democracy practiced by this FijiFirst Government. According to *Fiji Sun* online, the Director Immigration's directive came from Government level. Furthermore, MWH Office in Fiji is winding down its business and over hundred people will lose their jobs, with their families faced with a very bleak future.

Madam Speaker, the fourth pillar of democracy is the media and a critical, independent and investigative media is the lifeblood of any democracy. The media must be free from Government interference but for Fiji, the draconian Media Decree still remains in force, and where pro-Government newspaper, radio and television stations openly parrot Government propaganda. The Media Decree and particularly, the punitive clause does not help the media organisations to fulfil their role as the watchdog of society.

Madam Speaker, the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights states, and I quote:

“Democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives.”

Madam Speaker, the recent detention of Non-Government senior leaders, including the Honourable Biman Prasad by police for participating in a forum to discuss the Constitution organised by NGO Pacific Dialogue, again reflects that the people are not really free to participate in the political community's self-government. Having said that, Madam Speaker, may I share some lyrics of Lucky Dube's song. The other side had shared some songs, and Lucky Dube's song is titled; “Micky Mouse Freedom”. It goes like this:

“They were told years ago that their country is free;
But they did not understand that it is not real;
They never knew that it was a Micky Mouse Freedom;
Me come in your country, That is said to be free.
Me sight corruption, Me sight starvation;
Walking like a millionaire, cause you think your country is free;
One thing you do not know is that your country is being remote controlled;
Micky Mouse Freedom, Micky Mouse Freedom.”

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the call by His Excellency the President that we also cherish the French's Fundamental National Values of Liberty, equality and fraternity is definitely out of place

because these values must first be practiced in our Parliament, Civil Service and the Judiciary. We have to experience liberty, equality and fraternity in our daily lives, otherwise our democracy is still a sham.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency the President also said that it is wonderful privilege for him that during the first Constitution Day celebration on 7th September, 2016, Naomi Lewakita from the School of the Blind read out the rights of the disabled from the braille version of the Constitution. And further added that it was easily the most inspiring moment of the most inspiring day, so much so that Naomi was asked to be with us in this Chamber on that day and she also received the acclaim she so richly deserves for making us all proud.

Madam Speaker, I asked what is it in there for Naomi? *Dua ga na kena vakasausau* at the celebration, in this House and after she sang a song by Julia Zahra titled "It's just an illusion" at the Reception at Government House.

Madam Speaker, I am sure Naomi must have felt like a star and whilst Naomi was singing the title of the song "It's just an illusion" caught my attention and I thought, umm how ironical! But I hope and pray to God that The Rights of Person with Disabilities as captured under Section 42 of the 2013 Constitution and further contextualised under the Bill of 2016 will be realised and achieved because, Madam Speaker, His Excellency the President's Address only mentioned specific policies and what are they, we can only guess. Therefore, the implementation of the Bill for the benefit of those living with disabilities might end up as Naomi sang; "It's just an illusion".

Likewise, Madam Speaker, genuine democracy in Fiji will remain just and illusion as long as the 2013 Constitution remain in place because it is a machinery for political and economic deception by the FijiFirst Government. But having said that, Madam Speaker, this side of the House have, on numerous occasions, raised our genuine interest and plea that certain parts of the Constitution be revisited to make it more democratic and likewise, I make that same call again this afternoon.

Madam Speaker, putting into effect policies, programmes and practices which are generally agreed upon by the people are vital in the realisation of the outcomes of our democracy. The 2013 Constitution Section 81(4) states, and I quote:

"The President shall open each session of Parliament with an address outlining the policies and programmes of Government."

But, Madam Speaker, His Excellency the President's Address on the 12th September was the shortest that Fiji has ever hear, and it did not really outline any clear policies and programmes.

However, Madam Speaker, His Excellency the President also said that we are at halfway mark and even so, there is still no national development plan in place and may be that is the reason for the absence of clear policies and programmes in His Excellency's Address or is it because Fiji has a dysfunctional 2013 Constitution that has been imposed upon the people and the policies and the programmes that have been designed are more for political leverage to boost the Government's image rather than for the betterment of sustainable development for Fiji's future or is it because the Government has over-promised and made big announcements on policies and programmes but the outcome as promised to the people has been slow or non-existent due to poor implementation .

For example, Madam Speaker, in reality this new democracy has brought people high cost of living, high unemployment, low wages, high crime rate and especially violence against women and children, deteriorating health and education services where the free textbooks did not reach the rural and disadvantaged children on time, and where free medicine in most times always out of stock in Government Health Pharmacies.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency's Address also highlighted freebies and whilst this is beneficial to the people, the Government must first look at those communities that are without piped water supply and electricity. The Nairevurevunicagi Community in Kalabu are still waiting for their electricity connection and those in the maritime rural areas and the *TC Winston* victims in the areas of Ba, Ra, coastal Tailevu, Koro, Taveuni, Yacata and Vanua Balavu are all still waiting for solar power and reliable water supply.

Madam Speaker, people have been left homeless by *TC Winston* and that was eight months ago and they are still living in tents because the Government's Help for Home Initiative has done nothing much but give people false hopes for housing. Government announced that over 30,000 families have been assisted with the "Help for Home Initiative" but the electronic cards issued to hardware shops for supply of building materials are quite useless because people are still waiting due to a nationwide shortage, as again announced by Government. But, Madam Speaker, interestingly enough, when buying in cash from these same hardware shops the goods are supplied immediately. Therefore, it looks like the problem is not really the supply issue but looks more like a "cash" issue.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, the situation strongly suggests that Government may be facing cash flow problems because the hardware shops will only issue materials once cash is received. So this "Help for Home Initiative" may be is just a delay tactic to cover up for Government's problematic cash flow and which at the same time, demonstrating a real concern towards these families who have lost their homes.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency's Address did not mention any new policy and programme to urgently address these building material shortage, especially so when the cyclone season is just in front of us again. Without proper housing, all those 30,000 families will nosedive into poverty and the socio-economic burden will be much much more, especially with women and children taking the brunt of the blow.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, last week outstanding payment due to MWH by FRA hit the media headline and was cited as the reasons for contractual disagreement between MWH and FRA, and one wonders if it is the same problem of Government cash flow.

Madam Speaker, in this the new democracy that His Excellency is talking about, we the people of Fiji will pay heavy costs brought about by this political and economic deception used by this FijiFirst Government for political mileage.

Madam Speaker, another interesting development in the past week is the Cabinet reshuffle by the Honourable Prime Minister. Whilst we acknowledge that it is a matter of prerogative on the other side, the concern on this side of the House is whether this move will effectively address the following call by His Excellency the President:

- 1) improve performance; and
- 2) improve quality of service to the people because it is to the people that we owe our allegiance and whose interests we have solemnly sworn to uphold as Members of Parliament.

Madam Speaker, some of those Ministers have been given extra portfolio which means extra responsibilities, some with bigger portfolios with bigger responsibilities so what guarantee does the Honourable Prime Minister have that these Ministers will perform to or beyond expectation?

To conclude, Madam Speaker, our democracy is still very fragile just like any other country that is transitioning from a military regime into a democracy. The onus is on the Government to restore peace and bring all sections of our society, especially those groups that have been hurt and are still hurting.

Madam Speaker, if we are serious and committed to nurturing our new found fragile democracy to grow to one that is stable and sustainable, I urge and kindly request Government to seriously consider putting in place the following:

- 1) Constitution Review Commission;
- 2) Truth and Reconciliation Commission;
- 3) Implement the recommendations of the Multi-Observer Group Report;
- 4) Lesser military role in Government and reduction in the size of the military and its budget; and
- 5) Review decrees that will help provide an enabling environment to nurture our democracy.

May God bless Fiji and its people. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, my fellow colleagues, Honourable Members of the Opposition; I wish to begin by first thanking our President, His Excellency Konrote for his most gracious speech given to us all while opening the new session of Parliament two weeks ago.

Madam Speaker, before that, I want to bring to our attention this headline news in the *Fiji Times* today, "Dire Strait". The article says that the students from Veidrala Village on the coast of Ra do not have food when they go to school. Madam Speaker, the journalist asked me about this last week and I said to her, "Give me a day". After that I told her that there are three schools in that area – Mataso Primary School, Navitilevu District School and Nailuva District School where the students from Veidrala Village attend.

All these three schools, Madam Speaker, have got School Feeding Programme, funded by DFAT (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) through the AQEP (Access to Quality Education Programme). They upgraded the schools and the students are fed, two of the schools also have boarding facilities where students are staying and boarding.

Madam Speaker, this kind of news articles is basically mischief-making to the highest order, totally irresponsible and I do hope that they will provide a retraction. A journalist from this newspaper went to the Nailuva District School and asked the Head Teacher as to how the students are doing. The Head Teacher said, "I am not supposed to comment, can you first log in your details in the visitors' book?" They refused to do that then left. They probably found some isolated parent in the village, interviewed them and then they gave this particular article, Madam Speaker, which is rather unfortunate, and people talk about free media.

Madam Speaker, in His Excellency's Address echoed the sentiments of our Honourable Prime Minister of "One Fiji, one people having one destiny." I wish to make a humble plea to all Opposition Members to leave behind their sectional and ethnic interest and quickly embrace this ideology for the betterment of our beloved country, Fiji.

Madam Speaker, if our Sevens Heroes can unite for a common national goal, I am sure we can all unite and accept the verdict of the people of this country given in the last Elections. Whilst some vocal members of the Opposition bench argued from time to time that we need more evidence of democracy at work, they themselves are undermining the single most important requirement of democracy and that is Elections. We went to polls with them, we presented to people our plans, bundled in the manifesto and so did they, Madam Speaker? The people of this country gave their verdict, the overwhelming majority of them rejected their plan and voted for our plan, and have asked us to run the Government as per the plan for the next four years.

Madam Speaker, time and again their behaviour is as if they are in Government. They need to understand for four years, people have voted us to be in the Government, for us to unroll and implement our plan as we sold out to them. The manifesto that the people have voted for had become our contract with the people of Fiji, Madam Speaker, and we have to deliver. They need to understand that that is the fundamental of democracy.

Madam Speaker, while going over the speech of His Excellency, I noted a common sentiment, “of meeting the aspirations of ordinary Fijians, raising the benchmark of excellence in whatever we do, accountability and speeding up reforms to remain relevant to contemporary global market, should we want to benefit from what is out there on offer.”

Madam Speaker, as indicated by His Excellency, fundamental to this agenda is to educate our children and let knowledge be the foundation of the future Fiji. We will never go wrong by investing in education. Worldwide this is recognised that education is the greatest equaliser in any society, Madam Speaker. We cannot be stagnant with our thoughts, ideas, strategies and goals, we need to consistently evaluate ourselves and bring about relevant transformations to attain national vision and aspirations. Unfortunately, they just cannot understand this aspect of this Government. We continuously look at raising the benchmark, they are stuck in the 60s and 70s.

Madam Speaker, our Government and its all its development plans have time and again stressed that education is a top priority. We want to achieve success for all Fijians, Madam Speaker, and attain peace and prosperity through a nationwide educational drive. We want to ensure that every Fijian citizen's educational aspirations are met and all barriers of education are removed.

Madam Speaker, we intend to build an educated Fijian society where people excel in various areas and professions, and the rise of variable ethnicity and emotions and gender, class, religion, et cetera, make decisions based on logic and the ability to analyse and separate

Madam Speaker, we want to build a culture of economic excellence. Added to this, we want to safeguard our treasured cultural diversity, harness from it and teach our children with values and virtuous education. Therefore, it is mandatory that the education system reflects these transformations whilst delivering its service to the children.

We cannot be rooted to the past methodologies and practices and use that to educate our children of the present era. The world has changed and we need to rise up and adopt change if we wish to be relevant, Madam Speaker, otherwise we will become irrelevant, we will be churning out children out of all primary, secondary and university school would become irrelevant.

Nowadays, we are not only preparing students to find successful career pathways but also nurturing important skills such as resilience, technological innovation, flexibility, collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking and having creative mindset.

We are not only preparing them for the labour market, a job seeker but also preparing them to learn to plan out a job giver. Schools, therefore, have to offer situations in an environment which inculcates these attributes, thereby supporting students' policy growth and development.

Following 1970, we have witnessed four decades of selective education policy which has been one of the root causes of inequality in Fiji. Education policy where:

- 1) Schools were reserved for children from privileged members of the society;
- 2) Scholarships were provided to children of the privileged on ethnic lines; and
- 3) Employment opportunities in public sector are mostly reserved for selected few privileged members of the society who are connected.

Madam Speaker, these policies were the recipe for perpetuation, hardship and poverty inter-generation. Children of poor households, poverty-stricken households will continue to remain in poverty because they could not afford to get their children through the education system.

There were also problems in the manner in which students were funded for tertiary education studies. While on one hand past governments were allocating a separate pool of money for tertiary scholarships for *iTaukei* students with a tune of \$10 million annually, this was hardly exhausted and this fact never came out in public. Let me give you the data.

In 2012, \$10 million was allocated under the Fijian Affairs Board Scholarship Scheme (FAB) but only \$8.7million was utilised. Similarly in 2013, again \$10 million was allocated under the FAB Scholarship Schemes, only \$7.1 million was utilised while \$2.9 million was not utilised. On the other hand, the Multi-Ethnic Scholarship for all the other ethnic group students was only allocated \$5.5 million.

Back to that \$10 million allocation, the million dollar question that we need to ask is; why was the full \$10 million not exhausted? On one hand, the *iTaukei* leaders at that time were arguing that we need to give more and more scholarship to the *iTaukei* students because they were lagging behind and rightfully so at that point in time, but the question is; why was the money not exhausted, Madam Speaker?

I will tell you the answer, Madam Speaker. The architects of this policy failed miserably to address the root cause of the problem. They got it all wrong from the start. When the children of the poor were not able to afford to complete primary and secondary school education, how can they finish secondary school and come up pick up the scholarship and exhaust the \$10 million? That was the problem, Madam Speaker.

While they were trying to address the accessibility of tertiary education at the universities, they forgot that there were people out there in the interior or in the maritime zone, struggling to send their children to primary and secondary schools. They could not afford to pay tuition fees, they could not afford to pay bus fare to get their children out there, and they could not afford to pay for their textbooks. There were children sent back from primary and secondary school because they could not pay fees. Here they are allocating \$10 million for them to pick up and go to the Universities. If we contribute \$20 or \$30 million but there would not be any takers because they fail to address, Madam Speaker, that they cannot pay their fees in the primary and secondary schools. This was the education policy they had.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- I will show you the data now.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Wait, it's my turn, I will show you the data.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Show us.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- I will show you the data.

In 2015 when we did not have free education, 212,668 students were in the pre-school, primary and secondary schools in Fiji.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the truth hurts.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Can you calm down? It is my time!

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- I'll get more time! You calm down, then I'll continue.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Please allow the Honourable Minister to continue.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- In 2012, when our Government started the Free Education Scheme from primary to secondary and university, Madam Speaker, this figure from 212,000 students in the primary, secondary and pre-schools increased to 222,000 students. We can see that and to be exact 222,145. Madam Speaker, 9,477 students were at home because they could not go to primary and secondary schools. You are talking about allocating millions of dollars for them to go to university but we are not addressing the problem in the primary and high school.

Madam Speaker, the enrolment numbers further increased in 2015 and 2016. In 2015, it was 223,000 students in our school system and this year we have got 226,694 students in our ECE, primary and high school system. Having done this, our FijiFirst Government has uprooted this ethnic-based scholarship award system of the past. We have implemented new and fair systems in education to attain equal treatment and to address the problem at a lower level.

Madam Speaker, the initiation of the National Toppers Scheme and the Tertiary Education Loans Scheme (TELS) for the 2014 Analysis has seen thousands of Fijian students attain higher qualification. In 2013, prior to the Free Education Scheme by the Government, before Toppers and TELS came in, a total of 5,434 students were studying in various tertiary institutions under the *iTaukei* Scholarship, Multi-Ethnic Scholarship, PSC Scholarship, et cetera, with a tune of \$41.5 million (prior to 2014 before TELS and Toppers came in). In 2014, when TELS and Toppers came in Government set aside \$78 million, a total of 6,329 students studied at various tertiary institutions; 5,434 rose to 6,349.

Last year the number again went up to 11,477 students studying in tertiary institutions. This is an increase of 6,443 students and it is a 111 percent increase. This year, the figure has further gone up to 13,000 students so currently we have got 13,233 students studying in various tertiary institutions and in 2013 prior to this financial scheme we had 5,000.

On Tuesday, one of the Honourable Members on the other side stated that only 20 *iTaukei* students were given Toppers Scholarship in 2014. Madam Speaker, we do not speak on ethnic line, but I am telling you that this is far from the truth. This is way below the actual number of *iTaukei* students who got Toppers Scholarship. I also want to let the Honourable Members know that in 2015 the number of *iTaukei* students getting Toppers Scholarship increase by 66.6 percent. It went up and this year the number of *iTaukei* students getting Toppers Scholarship increased by 55.2 percent.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. DR. M. REDDY. This is the truth! You do not feel good because this is what we are doing.

We have begun to unlock the potential amongst our children who were previously shunned because they belonged to the less privileged, they were in isolated in the interior and maritime zone. We are unlocking their potential.

Madam Speaker, Fiji is one of the very few countries in the world which has the provision of free education. This initiative by our Government will not only enable all students to reach school and get educated but through education, our children will be able to handle other contemporary issues they face and thus, there will be a reduction in social problems as well.

Through our Transport Assistance Scheme, we are now ensuring that no students have obstacles to get to school. We have even given boat and engine for children around coastal areas. Madam Speaker, I urge the Honourable Members here to read this article in today's *Fiji Sun*. The title says, "Galoa's 52 year plea finally heard." Yesterday, elders from Galoa Village in Kadavu came to receive a boat and engine.

Madam Speaker, the spokesman or the Village elder said in *I taukei* and I will translate, "We used to cry as all our requests were answered. Previous government officials used to come to our village, had a lot of sweet things to say but our cries were never heard. Today, we have witnessed that this Government does not only have the mouth to speak but also hands and legs to do" and do what they say, Madam Speaker. These were the sentiments shared by emotional Apisalome Coka, Sauturaga na Tui Cakau of the the Yavusa Natubuloka. Madam Speaker, this is how they were treated. They will go to the villagers, they will promise everything and say; "we will take the matter up". They will never come back, they will never return. This is a standard line, Madam Speaker. They will go, they will enjoy all the goodies and say; "we will take the matter up." We do not know where this up is, Madam Speaker, but they will never return.

We have not ended there, Madam Speaker. We cannot forget the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Sector. That is the base and foundation for primary education. However, it was unorganised and treated as it belonged to the privileged only. Parents were asked to pay tuition fees and management to pay salaries of ECE teachers. They were running from pillar to post but no one was there to listen to them. This Government has now decided to pay every child's tuition fee and full salary of every ECE teacher. Let me prove, Madam Speaker, and give evidence of how many students who are staying at home and when this scheme became free, they came in. In 2012, we had 9,577 students studying in ECE and now, we have 14,135 students studying in ECE.

Madam Speaker, we have also our Honourable Prime Minister, during the campaign time, realised that there are lots of children with aptitude in the skill area. Not everyone can become an economist or a doctor. As promised in the manifesto, our Government has delivered a technical college with 12 campuses now. The first lot of students graduated last year from the three campuses with 350

students and this year, we have got 2,631 students studying in the various 12 campuses in the various skills that they have. Madam Speaker this is how we are addressing the issue of education in Fiji.

We do not want our children to get irrelevant. As outlined above we have dismantled the discriminatory in inequitable education policies of the past because we want all Fijians to grow and prosper. There has been resistance and this resistance is still found in small pockets now from some who cannot get over ethnic-based policies, Madam Speaker.

I kind of sympathise with them, Madam Speaker, because some of them have been born out of this system. Some have been beneficiaries of this system either directly or indirectly while some were owners of this system. They will resist but they will fade out over time because we have a national movement in support of ideology of our Honourable Prime Minister. The revolution continues.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Mataiasi Niumataiwalu.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Cabinet Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen; I believe it is a hard act to follow after the speech by the Honourable Minister for Education but allow me, as I add my sentiments in congratulating His Excellency the President Major-General (Ret'd) Jioji Konrote for his gracious speech in the opening of the 2016-2017 Parliament Session.

Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by reading excerpts from His Excellency's speech on 12th September, 2016 in this august House. He said, and I quote:

“It has been truly a bitter sweet year. The bitter impact and legacy of TC Winston coupled with one of the sweetest moments in Fijian history that none of us who witnessed it will ever forget.

The Olympic gold that our Rugby Sevens team brought back from Rio de Janeiro has had a profound effect on the national psyche. They have brought Fijians together in a way we could never have imagined. And they have triggered a surge of national pride and patriotism that has been shared by every Fijian.”

I would like to focus my contribution on ‘where to from here’, following our gold medal win at the Rio Olympic Games.

Madam Speaker, as you know that straight after the July session of Parliament, I sought leave to be in Rio for the 31st Olympic Games. I was going in my capacity as the Media and Communications Manager for the Oceania National Olympic Committee (ONOC). Madam Speaker, it would be amiss of me if I did not acknowledge the only other member who witnessed the historic Sevens win in Rio, the Honourable Prime Minister, Ratu Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama.

I believe as someone who has eaten ripe mangoes or ripe bananas, it is a different thing when it is ripe from the tree and that is the experience that we want to share with you today. Being there, seeing the Sevens and seeing that our Honourable leader is there to add to the Fiji Sevens team's victory, that is what I call the X- factor.

One young Fijian spectator said in one of his postings on *Facebook*, when years have passed and his grandchildren will ask about Fiji's gold medal win in Rio, he said this, "I have only three words to tell them, I was there."

A lot of credit has been rightfully heaped on the victorious Sevens Coach and Team. However, when I look back to the London Olympics in 2012, we had some good performances but nothing compared to Rio.

In the 2013 National Budget, the Honourable Prime Minister in his foresight set aside \$1 million for the establishment of the National Sports Commission. For the last several years, funds have been given to the National Sports Commission to get in top coaches, such as Ratu Peni Raiyani Latianara. That is his vision. Ratu Peni told CNN before the final that he is being told by the Honourable Prime Minister that only a gold will do. That is so simple. He had a mission, a vision and he had to accomplish it.

Immediately after the 43-7 drubbing of Great Britain at Deodoro Stadium in Rio, I caught up with several people straight after the game and here are what they said.

The Honourable Prime Minister said this:

"I want to thank all the supporters here, especially our Pacific Islands and Oceania. They have come together to support us and they were great in the rugby stands".

The ONOC Secretary General and Guam National Olympic Committee (NOC), President Ricardo Blas said:

"Just watching the Fiji boys play, they played their hearts out and boy, they just went for that task every time there was an opportunity and the end result gold medal for Fiji and Oceania."

"Thank you Fiji for giving Oceania this honour, thank you."

Hugh Graham of Cook Islands:

"Well its history in the making for Fiji, we are very proud of this achievement, their first ever gold medal in the Sevens. Obviously it is a huge achievement for Fiji but also for us in the small island nations as you can hear I lost my voice from cheering for Fiji but they deserve it, well done."

Cyrille Mainguy from Vanuatu:

"I thought the Fijian players were just brilliant and when they received the medal that Fijian respect you know, kneeling in front of Princess Anne I really thought this is a bunch of humble players and they won gold and for the first time in 92 years, that rugby is back and the gold is for Fiji."

The New IOC Member from Papua New Guinea said this:

"It's incredible. Fiji's gold medal win is historic and it is not just a win for Fiji but it is a win for the Pacific and Oceania and we all celebrating".

Nauru's Chef de Mission Sean Oppenheimer said this:

“Hey, we are all one big family in Oceania, I couldn't be any happier than anyone else in the whole of Oceania particularly in Fiji”.

Dr Kami of Tonga said;

“We've been waiting a long time for this moment. They did it convincingly and they proved that they are the best in the world and we celebrate with them. There was tears in my eyes when the Fijian team won. I'm so honoured to have shared this historic moment.”

Jerick Sablan, a Guam Journalist;

“Fiji's rugby win was a huge inspiration for me a journalist. To see a tiny Pacific Island nation win a gold at the Olympics in a team sport was something I will remember for the rest of my life.

I wrote a story back home on the win and it got a lot of shares and reads and many people commented how proud they were over the win. We're thousands of miles away, but we still felt the pride and joy for Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I am also proud of our Fijian Media personnel who made the trip. For the first time after several Olympic Games we managed to get nine of our own journalists to Rio, namely from *Fiji Sun*, *Fiji Times*, *Fiji TV* and *FBCTV*. These journalists worked close to 20 hours a day and face all sorts of difficulties to send their stories back home for our readers and viewers.

The President of the Pacific Games Council, our very own Vidya Lakhan in contributing to this presentation this afternoon says; “Government's continued financial support over a longer period of time is critical to Fijian athletes succeeding internationally.” Lakhan says that the Fiji Rugby Sevens win in the Rio Olympics is a classical case in point. They did not win the gold medal by coming together just 12 months before the Olympics. They have been, thanks to Government's financial support, playing at the highest level internationally year in and year out to retain their competitive edge. That is just one sport. Imagine if we did the same for more sports, more Olympic medals is a strong possibility.

The Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee (FASANOC) have said that the Rio Olympics represented many 'firsts' for FASANOC. These included first time to have received:

- Six International Olympic Committee athlete scholarships of which four recipients attended the Games;
- First time to have the inclusion of team sports on Team Fiji;
- Highest number of athletes qualified on merit rather than by universality places – Robert Elder (Archery), Josateki Naulu (Judo), Glenn Kable (Shooting), Sally Yee (Table Tennis), Apolonia Vaivai and Manueli Tulo (Weightlifting), Rugby 7's Men and Women Team and Football;
- Two qualified athletes in two sports for the Paralympic Games;
- Largest team size of 54 athletes and 32 officials;
- First female Chef de Mission to an Olympic Games and last but not least;

- our first Gold medal.

The positive outcomes as follows:

- The significant international exposure received by Fiji as a nation;
- the unity of the nation in acknowledging the Rugby 7's team victory; and
- the appearance of Fiji athletes on the Olympic Channel.

Madam Speaker, I believe our young athletes would have picked up a lot of positive attributes working alongside our Sevens Team, something the Sevens Team showed the rest of Team Fiji that there has been a paradigm shift in how we approach the Olympic Games. This was no longer a place for personal bests and also rans. The focus is now on the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which is closer to home.

Apart from Rugby, Boxing, Table Tennis, Athletics, Swimming, Shooting and Weightlifting have targeted athletes and programmes already in place looking forward to 2020. FASANOC feels two key factors that affected performance were:

- 1) Lack of financial support and resources; and
- 2) Lack of regular high level competition.

So, how do we tackle this?

Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports must partner with key stakeholders such as the sporting federations, National Olympic Committee, National Sports Commission, Fiji Sports Council and experienced and professional individuals to put a Roadmap in place. Government needs to take firm steps to protect the integrity of sports and clean athletes. Drugs in sports, match fixing, violence in sports offences should all be criminalised. Those caught should be charged and taken to court.

Looking ahead to Tokyo 2020, I am told that FASANOC already has in motion a resurgence agenda focussed on capacity building of National Federations, athletes and athlete support personnel with a view for long term planning.

The Executive Board of FASANOC has committed to supporting this agenda, including reviewing its own organisational and management structures. FASANOC has already met the International Relations Team of the Tokyo 2020 in Rio and we will be working with them on collaboration and interaction through their "Dare to Dream" Programme.

Providing athletes with a pathway through Team Fiji's participation, we have the:

- 2017 Commonwealth Youth Games in Bahamas;
- 2017 Asian Indoor and Martial Art Games in Turkmenistan;
- 2017 Pacific Mini Games in Vanuatu;
- 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia;
- 2018 Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina;
- 2019 Pacific Games in Tonga; and

- 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

In order to produce result from other sports like the Rugby Sevens Gold Medal, the same level of funding and support needs to be provided across targeted sports. Long term preparation is the key focus at the moment. Currently, we are able to finalise funding for our activities and participation at major meets with the few weeks or at best a few months lead up.

Most sports now produce four years strategic plans, however, funding these plans happen on a very short term arrangement. We need four year funding plans and commitments between Government, the National Sports Commission and FASANOC, along with the National Sports Federation for us to be effective. As an example, by end 2016 we hope and we know that all the funding for 2017–2020 or quadrennial (four years).

Then in 2018 we should have the 2021-2024 plans. This will ensure improved planning, more commitment to athletes' long term careers and clarity of each National Federation's activities. This type of arrangements will help FASANOC, Team Fiji and the National Federations plan effectively and be more responsible for their performances and outcomes.

Madam Speaker, if we are able to achieve this, there will be an overall improvement in the performances that we look forward to. And just last week outgoing United Nations Secretary General Ban ki Moon also congratulated Fiji's Gold Medal win in Rio when he met up with the Honourable Prime Minister. The United Nations Secretary General commended Fiji's leadership within the United Nations at a meeting with the Honourable Prime Minister at the margins of the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly.

The Secretary General commended Fiji for its peacekeeping commitments, co-hosting of the 2017 Oceans Conference, successful Election to the presidency of the United Nation General Assembly and for working towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations Secretary General also thanked the Honourable Prime Minister for Fiji's leadership as the first country to ratify the Paris Agreement and for speaking at the high level event on the Paris Agreement and to cap it off, the Honourable Prime Minister was one of the two leaders invited to speak at a high level event, the other being the United States Secretary of State, Mr. John Kerry.

Madam Speaker, this is really punching above our weight. And as I bring it home, I would like to tell the story from our daily bread that I read yesterday that will give light to His Excellency the President saying, "it has truly been a bitter-sweet year". Here is the story.

Like many towns, Enterprise, Alabama has a permanent monument. But the monument in Enterprise is unlike any other. The statue does not recognise a leading citizen; it celebrates the work of a beetle.

In the early 1900s this boll weevil made its way from Mexico to the Southern United States. Within a few years it had destroyed entire crops of cotton, the primary source of revenue. In desperation farmers started growing other crop-peanuts. Realising they had been dependent on one crop for too long, they credited the beetle with forcing them to diversify which led to increased prosperity.

The boll weevil is like things that come into our lives and destroy what we have worked hard to accomplish.

Devastation is frightening. We witness the end of life as we know it, but as the people of Enterprise learned, the loss of what is old is an opportunity to discover something new. God may use hardship to get us give up a bad habit or learn a new virtue. Instead of striving to preserve old habits that are no longer effective, we can view every hardship as an opportunity for God to cultivate a new virtue in us. God often uses bitter experiences to make us better.

Madam Speaker, as we move forward as a nation there must be a paradigm shift, from the old ways of doing things for the Fiji that we all love to be part of.

I thank you for your indulgence and may the good Lord bless all Fijians.

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

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to add my voice to the other Honourable Members of the House by congratulating His Excellency the President for his most gracious and befitting Address during the opening of this Parliamentary Session.

Madam Speaker, as an Honourable Minister responsible for Disaster Management let me begin by stating my utmost appreciation also to His Excellency for highlighting the devastating impact of *Tropical Cyclone Winston* to all Fijians, and how we have been able to rebuild together through huge relief provisions by the FijiFirst Government and the resilience of the Fijian people.

Madam Speaker, before continuing further, let me just clarify a few issues, particularly the ones raised by the Honourable Nawaikula. Dalomaloma Slip, Madam Speaker, is a known case to all engineers who have been deployed to the North, including the most recent work done by the Chinese. The history behind that, Madam Speaker, according to the landowners, there is a fountain under that road and the initial advice that they gave when the road was constructed was not taken seriously by those who did that and all attempts from then till now has continued to fail. So it is nothing about the recent work done by this Chinese men, they did their best. I was quite impressed with the work they did but unfortunately, that is the history and it is nothing to do with the incompetency of the contractors or because of this recent Government.

Madam Speaker, *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, I have stated it. We save lives, we sustain lives and we reconstruct and rebuild lives. Those are the three main aspects of responding to disaster. The Christchurch earthquake was in 2011 and New Zealand is still reconstructing, Madam Speaker. *Cyclone Thomas* was in 2010 and as we speak, the last 28 houses for Rabi is currently under construction and the engineers will be there again in the next two weeks to complete this reconstruction. Reconstruction takes time, Madam Speaker. Let us help the people with the right message, they are already traumatised but it is the duty of a responsible Member of Parliament to give the right advice to the people. Let us not add to the predicament, Madam Speaker.

Kanakana and Karoko Villages, Madam Speaker, I have stated in this House, Karoko was done by an NGO through AusAID. Kanakana is being done in two phases, Madam Speaker, we have done the first initial technical scoping and they did some work, that is temporary. It will be funded in the current financial year's Budget, Madam Speaker.

Water stands in Vivili and the other communities, Madam Speaker, development is about protection. Government has a responsibility, the recipients also have a responsibility. If you go to Nausori right now Madam Speaker, there are tanks next to the Commissioner's compound. The Commissioners

and the DO's have gone to the recipients of the tanks under the Rainwater Harvesting Policy where all the recipients have been requested to construct the stands. Once the stands are ready, then the tanks will be delivered. They have a responsibility.

Fixing of generators, Madam Speaker, after the project are commissioned the responsibility are on the recipients. Government has handed over the project but if people do have difficulties, then they can always come back to Government, but what I am trying to emphasise, Madam Speaker, is partnership in development.

I do acknowledge that I have received some letters from the Honourable Nawaikula but what I did was, through you, Madam Speaker, I need to verify this because when it comes from politicians you have to think twice. We have got our people on the ground. I have to verify and it is now with the Commissioner Northern because we have the machinery of Government in place. We have the District Development Committee, the Provincial Development Committee and we have the Divisional Development Committee. It is surprising that these issues are not raised in any of this.

Madam Speaker, this is every now and then but again back to His Excellency's Address, it is alleged that it is lacking or limited in scope and light on context, to me it is simple, actions speak louder than words. He does not have to say much because His Excellency and other Fijians are seeing the development that is unfolding before them, Madam Speaker. I would rather focus on issues rather than politics this afternoon because I have go two important portfolios to look after.

The impacts of *TC Winston* around the country consequently provided a new dimension. Three major lessons learnt, the:

- 1) way we live;
- 2) way we do development; and
- 3) how we look at cooperation.

Those are the three major lessons learnt. We have compiled all the lessons learnt, there will be report that will be distributed soon. I suggest to all Honourable Members of the House, this is the Fiji post-disaster needs assessment, this is the official one that has just been released last week and it is available from the Ministry of Strategic Planning and Economy. This very much drives the recovery process. There are competing sectors, Madam Speaker, I will not go into the detail but what I want to emphasise is those are three lessons learnt.

The way we live, the future is going to be different definitely. The new norm is the frequency and the severity, climate change which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has talked about, so we need relook at the way we live and that is the advice that we need to tell the people. Do the way we do development. Let us not just do development for the sake of doing development. We should be climate smart and we should be resilient in the way we look at development issues and most importantly, Madam Speaker, the way we do cooperation.

We again acknowledge the work of our international partners, bilateral partners and friends and, of course, Non-Government Organisations and civil society organisations. On that note, Madam Speaker, I wish to acknowledge again the work of Habitat for Humanity Fiji and for Fiji Red Cross Society, we had meetings last week, we visited them because they about to roll out their projects. They are not doing that in isolation, Madam Speaker, because the funding comes through the cluster arrangement which is chaired by Government, so I must acknowledge the work that they are doing.

Recovery, Madam Speaker, as I have alluded to, our recovery programme is guided by this. I was quiet shocked to hear that we forgo some of the other activities and we concentrated on just one. It

is something that is not gone out of logical process of reasoning. It is plucking from thin air. This is the guidance and Government has embarked on a number of initiatives, that is part of the recovery work and have learned to improve our response preparedness.

I limit my contribution on rural development because the Honourable Cawaki, my Deputy Minister had already spoken at length on this when he delivered his speech on Monday. I have talked about the lessons learnt, this is all about efficiency. It is all about being proactive and I have already stated in this House, the Fiji Government made a strategic shift way back in 2008, shifting from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. We have talked about the economic growth, a consistency over the seven years. Madam Speaker, this is about that strategic shift - investing into disaster risk reduction and this is why the lessons learnt are so important for all of us.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, on rural development and disaster, I am just pleased and I acknowledge the Fiji Business Council for their contribution, not only in our local disasters but last year when we deployed to Vanuatu on *Cyclone Pam*, almost everything that was taken to Vanuatu was from the private sector. This year before we went to Turkey in May for the World Humanitarian Summit, we launched the Fiji Business Disaster Council and, of course, that has enabled the private sector to coordinate their responses and initiatives on disasters better through our formal body and the private sector will now be in a better position to assist Government in times of disasters and their contribution would assist in building a resilient and climate-smart Fiji.

I move onto agriculture, Madam Speaker, again, like all other Ministries in Government, the Ministry for Agriculture played a major role in the rehabilitation process and the rebuilding process. This was through the mobilisation of officers to conduct a preliminary survey of damage to crops and livestock immediately after the cyclone and the mobilising of seeds and planting material. This greatly assisted in restoring food security after the cyclone and the rapid production of short-term vegetables and rootcrops.

May I say at this stage, Madam Speaker, that there have been some calls and the papers/articles about people needing extra food. There is a process in Government and people just need to follow that. People are free to make a request but health has to also make some assessments on the situations in the areas that are specifically asking for food. Are there cases of malnutrition because people can just ask for food just for the sake of having food? Then agriculture comes in as well as assesses the situations because we did a lot in distributing seeds to all Fijians and as you go around Fiji today particularly on vegetables, our markets are flooded and people have also gained a lot in terms of their livelihood because of the distribution.

Madam Speaker, I have talked about the post-disaster needs assessment, the damage to the sector was about FJ\$542 million and the consequences of these damages and losses are expected to be felt over the next few years, given at most particularly yaqona, tree crops and livestock would take at least three to five years to maturity for the livestock industry in particular. Damage to infrastructure would take some time to repair and get production back to normal.

Madam Speaker, as I have indicated before, the best we can do is to pick up the pieces of what is left and build upon it for the future but this time around build back stronger, safer, better and smarter. The agriculture sector like other sectors of the economy has surely been exposed by the enormity of damages caused by *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. However, Government through the Ministry of Agriculture has refocused its rehabilitation and recovery efforts to capitalise on the opportunities that have arisen out of the disaster in the form of new market demands for commodities, renewed engagement, partnership with the private sector and, of course, our external partners as well.

The Ministry, over the last few months, have been engaged in consultations with representatives of a number of local agro-processes in efforts to link production of rootcrops, fruits and vegetables to the

demands of the market. The local private sector, the agro-processes have made a commitment of supporting Government through modernisation of the agriculture sector and stand-by ready to absorb local crop production. The main reason why we are doing this, as I have already alluded to in my budget address, for a long time we have been focusing only on production. We were production-driven but we neglected the whole value chain and the market is very very important because for an ordinary Fijian and particularly for our farmers, they only know about one market, those are the municipal markets. For someone in Tailevu, it is either Korovou, Nausori or Suva. Those are the only markets they know. They do not know about exporters, they do not know about those that do processing, they do not know about the needs in the supermarkets and the hotels, and this is why we are linking up with the private sector.

Madam Speaker, let me inform the House that of a few agro-processes that are contributing in a big way to the agro processing subsector; one is AGRANA, the agro-processes in Sigatoka. One of the Directors will be here next week and I will be meeting him on Wednesday to talk about the link from the market to the processes and most importantly, the new technology that they will bring in as well. Agro-processes has the potential to produce 5,000 tonnes of finished goods from around 10,000 to 15,000 tonnes of fresh fruits and vegetables. These include banana, passionfruit, guava, lemon, pineapple, mango and tomato from which AGRANA Ltd produces the valley fresh brand.

Joe's Farm Produce Limited, a name synonymous with local fresh vegetables production and exports has embarked on a national project for the production and packing of mixed vegetables for export using fully local grown vegetables. The Ministry is working with the company in organising farmers into clusters to ensure consistency in supply of fresh vegetables for processing and I know for a fact, Madam Speaker, that the Honourable Gavoka has already mentioned this in Parliament and, of course, it is not only about the Nadroga/Navosa area. As we speak, they have moved into five other strategic locations in Fiji where they are thinking of setting up to do the similar setup that they have established already in the Nadroga/ Navosa region. Of course, we are liaising closely with them on their further programmes for development.

Foods Pacific Limited, Madam Speaker, has invested heavily in machines for production of ginger paste that it currently exports to overseas markets. The company has also begun works on the production of cinnamon from locally grown cinnamon plants and has engaged experts from Sri Lanka.

Ben's Trading which is the biggest export of dalo in Fiji has now fulfilled Hazards conditions for food safety which now qualifies the company to export direct to major supermarket chains in Australia and New Zealand. Government through the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism assisted to fulfil these conditions through the Demand Driven Approach funds and the National Export Strategy funds.

Agro Processors Limited in Navua, again, is the biggest exporter of processed ginger and has the potential to process 250 tonnes to 300 tonnes of organic ginger in the North American and European markets. This market has a demand of 500 to 600 tonnes of ginger and the Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture is working with the company to organise organically produced ginger to meet this demand.

Madam Speaker, again, I will just highlight one; the outpouring of national unity and pride shown by the Fijian people during the National Sevens victory celebrations was overwhelming. On that note, I would like to inform the House that the Government, through the Ministry of Agriculture, will be launching a new tomato variety, which we have been researching for the last few years. It will be launched on 14th October, 2016 and it will be called the "Rio Gold" variety.

Through you, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Radrodro is not here. I hope if she has Lucky Dube's contact, if he can contact Lucky Dube ...

(Laughter)

... to compose a song for this new Rio Gold variety.

Madam Speaker, I have a lot of other issues to raise but let me say, again, the Ministry of Agriculture, under my leadership, will continue to support the ongoing efforts of Government to modernise our nation State. We have learnt valuable lessons from historical past of our nation and here is the time to move forward as a people and as a nation, regardless of our different ethnicities or religion. We need to show the world that it can be done, just like what we showed the world that rugby can do it in the Olympics, despite all odds.

Madam Speaker, let me congratulate His Excellency the President of Fiji for His most gracious speech that have wisdom attached to every line of it. All Fijians should be inspired by the call for the sense of unity, pride, purpose made by His Excellency and commit to moving in forward together as one people and one nation.

God Bless Fiji, Madam Speaker, thank you.

(Applause)

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

HON. B. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Cabinet Ministers and Honourable Members, development partners, media, friends, citizens watching live stream from the comfort of their homes, ladies and gentlemen: *bula vinaka* to you all from this august House.

Madam Speaker, I stand to congratulate His Excellency the President, Major-General (Retired) Jioji Konrote for his gracious speech on the opening of the 2016-2017 Parliamentary session and my response is tailored on Civil Service reforms and transparency as the heart of administration.

Transparency is a pillar in good governance, which is almost always a contentious topic. The management of public institutions and public resources is something that draws controversy and criticism. This concerns us, as this is the very core of the engine and improving the service delivery to the citizen is the fundamental for FijiFirst Government.

The importance of putting in place mechanisms to openness and respond to people's demands for accountability and participation is now being recognized by the Bainimarama-led Government. Our society is delighted by the persistent failure of past governments to extend equal opportunity, dignity and worth to all. Inequalities in access to good schools, decent healthcare, safe places to play, culture, sporting opportunities, good nutrition and so much more leave our society less free, less fair and less united. To put it differently, transparency is about nurturing inclusive institutions; institutions which allow citizen's voices to be heard, whether that is in policy making, budgeting or service delivery to the citizens at large.

The public accountability and political credibility are the cornerstone principles. Our behaviour and ethical standards is an essential element to secure public trust in the efficiency, transparency and equity of democratic systems, whilst nurturing a culture of service/customer centric by the civil service that favours public interests over private gains.

Madam Speaker, good public services are one of the foundation stones of a civilized society. We rely on the Police to patrol our street to deter crime. When we take our children to school, we look to

teachers to pass on to them the best of human knowledge to enable the future leaders take ownership of good governance.

We demand that our bins are collected regularly and that parks are maintained for our citizens to patronage with fear. Good public services are an essential part of everyday life, and being able to access those services is one of the most basic requirements that the FijiFirst Government has embarked in return for prudent tax management.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government believes it has a fundamental responsibility to ensure the provision of high quality accessible public services, which is in core services like policing schools and improving the health and medical services are free at the point of use. There is excellence in all our public services, but many people do not have access to this excellence, which has been the challenge for the Bainimarama Government.

The lapse in prudent financial management and sound decision making process by previous governments has deprived the citizens the quality and accessibility of best public service, better equipped hospitals and health clinics, ice houses, police stations. Schools are now being built in the remote places and maritime islands, jetties, wharfs on islands and better roads like the Kings Highway - Nabouwalu to Dreketi Highway. These initiatives have been done by the FijiFirst Government as an investment to ensure growth within the local economy and to foster economic participation for all Fijians. Not only this, Madam Speaker, these initiatives are done so that public service can be more efficient in delivering and dealing with the citizens of this country.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government believes that a new approach to delivering public service is urgently needed. The principles that inform our approach and the policies we will enact to give its force, signals a decisive end to the old-fashioned, to-down, take what you are given model of public services. We are opening public service because we believe that giving people more control over the public services they receive, and opening up the delivery of those services to new providers, will lead to better public services for all. Whatever the circumstances, FijiFirst Government would be modernising public services.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government has embarked on reforming our public services because it is only by tackling the unfairness and inefficiencies which still exist in the public sector that we can all play fair. . All of us rely on good public service to lead civilised lives in a cohesive nation. The promise of care based on need ability to pay is inviolable. While we all have a share interest in the best possible public service, we know that the poorer we are, the more we rely on the State and its agencies.

Those who live in our most disadvantaged communities rely most critically on the National Health Services and need most urgently to see public health improve. Our poorest children depend most powerfully on high-quality childcare, good pre-school provision and excellent teaching to flourish in later life. Those in our most economically impoverished neighbourhoods rely on it and the FijiFirst Government is committed to realise better service delivery to all Fijians.

Madam Speaker, we can do better. These outcomes are neither socially just nor economically efficient. Poor performance could be offset by higher spending when the economy was booming but this option is unsustainable now that the country needs to limit public spending to deal with the deficit due to the myopic vision or short sightedness of our past leaders. Besides, the cause of poor standards in the public sector is not a lack of resources, nor is it low expectations form citizens, a lack of passion from public sector workers or the absence of ambition from successive government. Rather, it is an outdated approach to organising public services that is out of step with the way we live now.

Madam Speaker the FijiFirst Government vision to open public service places power in the hands of public and staff, people with additional power or incentives to help boost those who would otherwise be disadvantaged in the market place. To achieve this, the Banimarama-led Government will embark on modernising the public service based on the principles of:

- 1) Wherever possible we will increase choice;
- 2) Public service will be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level;
- 3) Public service should be open to a range of providers;
- 4) We will ensure fair access to public services;
- 5) Public service should be accountable to users and taxpayers; and
- 6) Provision of user-satisfaction service.

Madam Speaker, this idea of devolving power and responsibility apply as much to those working in public services as it does to those using them. We want our citizens to have a choice about the services they use, and the only way for that to happen is for the provision to be opened up to a range of providers of different sizes and sectors.

In education, for example, we are already supporting new models of provision and new providers through the expansion of the Academies Programme and the introduction of Free Schools and TELS.

Madam Speaker, the Government has huge respect for the public service ethos and we are determined to deregulate the public sector and free its staff from the bureaucracy and central instruction that previous governments have used to run public services.

Most public sector staff are passionate and inspired, and are eager to provide a great service. If only we would let them, they are capable of far more innovation and insight that is currently unleashed, but with that freedom comes a responsibility to provide a high-quality service that people want. If those who are already providing that service prove incapable of, or resistance to, meeting people's demands then they must allow other providers to try.

We do not have an ideological presumption that only one sector should run services. High-quality services can be provided by the public sector, the voluntary and community sector, or the private sector.

Equally, it is clear that poor-quality services can occur in any sector. Competition can be very effective within just one sector – there are great examples of performance being improved by competition between good public sector schools, between voluntary sector providers in social care and between private sector suppliers of highway maintenance.

Madam Speaker, it is said: “kill tension before tension kills you, each your goal before goal kicks you, live life before life leaves you.”

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government commits to a programme of modernising public service based on the key principles of increasing choice, decentralising services, opening services to a range of providers, ensuring fair access and accountability to users and taxpayers. However, Government does not have all the answers and it cannot open public services alone. In fact, that is the reason that opening public services is so important, to allow people and communities the opportunities to shape services that best meet their own needs.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude, allow me to share sentiments on the light of change:

“There is no growth and development without change, you’ve got to let go of some old culture, and that can hurt. Often when I am in most pain, I realise it is coming from my trying to control everything or resisting the changes that come with progress and prosperity, but to see the light of change, that lights the other side of the tunnel, you need to be focussed and drive towards the light.”

Therefore, my message to the Honourable Members of the Opposition; be the change to see the light and accept the reality apparently achieved by the FijiFirst Government.

Madam Speaker, I would like to share another sentiment by one of the philosophers, and I quote:

“You cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individuals. To that end, each of us must work for his own improvement and at the same time, share a general responsibility for all your duty. Our particular duty being to urge those to whom we think we can be most useful.”

Madam Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence, God bless Fiji.

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

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, I rise to humbly seek some clarification.

Madam Speaker, we are debating on the Address by His Excellency's Opening Statement and here, we have a case whereby the Honourable Prem Singh did not obtain permission to be absent as per Standing Order. This is not a normal session. Here, we have got a subject matter to discuss and that is the Address by His Excellency so the clarification that I need, Madam Speaker, through you is, should he be allowed to contribute on the subject matter?

You will remember, and must have observed that I have never objected to him earlier in the day because that was a separate matter. That was a new matter during the debate but this is the subject matter whereby he chose to boycott and not to obtain the leave of absence from your Chair, so I need the clarification on that.

HON. SPEAKER.- This is a debate in response to the President's Address and the President's Address have been made available to all Members, including the NFP, although they boycotted. So they are also able to present their response to the President's Address.

Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, thank you for the ruling.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members of Parliament: I too join other Honourable Members in thanking His Excellency for his gracious Address. There is no doubt that His Excellency espouse Government's policies and programmes for the next year, therefore, he could only craft his Address in accordance with what His Excellency's Government intends to do.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency first stated that the Elections Office is already well-advanced in its preparations for the General Elections scheduled for 2018. While this may sound good to many, it is rightfully a matter of concern because the Election machinery is moving ahead even before we, as legislators in this highest court of the land discuss, debate and adopt changes to the electoral laws as recommended by the Multinational Observer Group (MOG), as well as the Electoral Commission in its Annual Report of 2014.

Madam Speaker, if we go by His Excellency's statement, then the pending outcome of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights in scrutinising the two Reports, as well as our discussions and debate will be meaningless or an exercise in futility because the Elections Office is moving on full-steam ahead in conformity to provisions of the electoral laws or decrees which have been recommended by the MOG and the Electoral Commission to be amended well in advance of the 2018 Elections.

While the 92 member MOG stated that the Elections were credible because it broadly represented the will of the Fijian people who voted freely, it made several pertinent recommendations. Suffice to say that the National Federation Party has made its submission to the Parliamentary Committee and we await its Report.

Madam Speaker, the Electoral Integrity and Ethical Conduct has many guiding principles that must be respected. The ACE Encyclopaedia on Electoral Integrity in any general election anywhere in the world, this comprehensive Report is internationally recognised from none other than the United Nations and the European Union and it can be found in their respective website at www.aceproject.org. It states and I quote:

“For an election to be genuine and credible, it is not enough that electoral administration be conducted in a relatively, orderly and professional manner.”

A free election also depends on freedom of speech, assembly, association and movement and freedom from fear. A fair election also requires a transparent electoral process, equitable electoral laws, regulations and systems; equal opportunities for all participants; an independent and impartial elections commission; lack of intimidation; proper procedures; and accurate tabulation and acceptance of electoral results.

Ethical conduct also involves respect for the political rights and activities of others; acceptance by citizens and electoral administrators that everyone has the right to freely debate political issues and promote different political viewpoints, and an understanding that no one has the right to interfere with political parties' efforts to spread their message or with other citizens' political activities.”

Madam Speaker, recommendations on amending the electoral laws or decrees to ensure Electoral Integrity and Ethical Conduct, and most importantly make the Elections genuine and credible. While people have the right to exercise their freedom to vote in the September 2014 Elections, we found anomalies in the final tabulation of results, as compared to what was recorded by our agents at some polling stations. In another case, a candidate received only one vote in 251 polling centres, where he did not even go while he did not receive the desired votes in polling stations within the proximity of his residence.

In a classic case, one of the candidates did not even get a vote at the polling station she voted in. She voted for herself, the final results recorded her votes as zero for that particular polling station, and she is a lawyer by profession. Therefore, it is vitally important that regressive measures in our electoral laws are amended well in advance of the next elections.

Madam Speaker, much has been said, both for and against the 2013 Constitution, but was the Constitution a will of the people or the imposition by a military regime that later became the FijiFirst Government? Most seem to have conveniently forgotten the process the military regime adopted in formulating this Constitution.

Madam Speaker, the process of arriving at this Constitution was flawed in the first place and all I wish to add is that, this Constitution is not cast in stone. If there is a will, there is way to change. Change must evolve with time and people who do not change with time are often left behind.

The Honourable Attorney General alluded to restoring the economy and its relevance to the constitutional provisions. I take heed of his contribution and this is linked to confidence, Madam Speaker, confidence is a very difficult thing. It takes years to build, it can be lost in a very short time. The Constitution needs to be reviewed to strengthen and further embrace the rights of the people to ensure that people or leaders with differing viewpoints are not subjected to political persecution.

Madam Speaker, Members of this Parliament who, this week have behaved as if they are seasoned politicians and know-it-all like the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure, who attacked a Party from which he received political tutelage took cheap shots at the Party Leader, the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad for calling the Constitution a sham. He has conveniently and deliberately shirked his tutelage on principles and no prizes for guessing why he has done so. The Honourable Minister is shedding crocodile tears by invoking the name of Honourable Justice Jai Ram Reddy because Justice Reddy has not been tainted by the *coup* culture of almost 30 years, and has risen head and shoulders above any politician of his generation. The Honourable Minister has betrayed the trust and the lessons of leadership that he learnt from him in a typical case of cheap flip-flop politics of divisiveness.

Madam Speaker, as Honourable Koroilavesau said that we cannot change the direction of the wind, all we can do is adjust the sails and in the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure's case, what he did was he could not adjust the sails at that time, so he succumbed through the direction of the wind.

Madam Speaker, nothing bothers me more when lives are lost in our hospitals either through negligence, lack of facilities or inability of patients to fund their treatment. I have consistently highlighted this since the start of parliamentary democracy in October, 2014. The latest is a tragic case of Ms. Komera Buka Tuicakau, who passed away on Tuesday morning at the age of 42 from kidney failure. She succumbed to her ailment because she could not afford the cost of kidney dialysis.

Komera was a proud old scholar of Adi Cakobau School and was from Kadavu. She was a renowned sports teacher who was instrumental in Adi Cakobau School's winning streak in the area of athletics. She was an athlete herself, a teacher, a wife and an inspiration for the many youth athletes that she mentored.

Madam Speaker, I raise Komera's tragic circumstances in Parliament because here was a woman of standing, of life and of vitality who, through no fault of her own, could not continue to shine her light simply because she struggled to find affordable healthcare. She pleaded for help through her *Facebook* posts, asking anyone to raise her plight with the Government and the fact is, one session of kidney dialysis costs \$250. That is \$750 per week for three required sessions.

Madam Speaker, during the last two Budget Addresses, the Opposition earnestly pointed out the need to raise allocation for kidney dialysis from \$300,000 to \$1 million to \$2 million, but instead the Government defeated our motion and saw it fit to allocate \$9 million to golf, \$18 million as marketing grant for Fiji Airways and over \$11 million to Fiji Broadcasting Commission for Public Service Broadcasting. But, Madam Speaker, I must say that after listening to the newly promoted Minister for

Health that she has the grasp, the understanding to at least acknowledge the problems in our health services, and I look forward to her to addressing these issues.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, Komera's plight will be replicated many times over for our people shackled by these debilitating costs unless Government refocusses its priorities. Until that happens or until Government changes hands in 2018, our people have no chance of getting fair and adequate treatment for kidney dialysis.

Madam Speaker, in 2016, the sugar industry has not only been ravaged by *TC Winston* but also by milling inefficiencies, cartage problems, mill breakdowns, to name a few.

The future of Penang Mill is uncertain, Madam Speaker. More than two months have lapsed since the Honourable Prime Minister told Ra farmers a decision would be made on the future of the Mill within two months after an assessment. To-date, nothing has been done. In the meantime, the Mill has been stripped of its spare parts or cannibalised, and have been taken to other mills. Even locomotives have been shipped to other mills. Ra farmers have to take their harvested cane to Rarawai Mill which suffers numerous stoppages. Lately, they have been offered \$30 per tonne to cart cane on their own to Rarawai.

Talking of cartage, Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Sugar inform Parliament in his right of reply whether tenders were called for cartage of cane by private contractors where the taxpayers are paying for their cartage cost, as well from an allocation of \$2.5 million? They are paid \$33 a tonne to cart cane?

Madam Speaker, on the 'Help for Homes' initiatives, this was a good initiative and we commended the Government during the Budget response. We commended Government because it was NFP's idea of providing \$5000 to each victim to enable them to rehabilitate their homes, in addition to the \$1,000 and \$5000 eligibility for withdrawal from FNPF by FNPF Members for either theirs or their immediate relative's homes.

Madam Speaker, when Government launched the initiative, it was intended for the victims to access necessary and basic building materials at bargain prices from 10 selected hardware companies. That is why we had recommended to Government to impose a duty and VAT reduction on some items until the end of this year, but unfortunately the duty reduction was a short-term measure.

However, Madam Speaker, some that received this "Help for Home" swipe cards have fallen victim to unscrupulous tactics of some companies. Their cards were swiped for the full amount but no material was supplied because they were not in stock. This was a deliberate tactic, forcing the victims to unjustifiably wait for the material when they could have visited other recommended outlets if their cards were not swiped in full. Government must investigate this immediately and take appropriate action against those indulging in this practice just as they have been quick to charge those people allegedly abusing the initiative.

Madam Speaker, I join the other Members of this august House in congratulation our Sevens heroes for their gold medal success in Rio. We believe more money, energy, resources to sustain this momentum to go to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. I wish them well in their future endeavours.

Madam Speaker, Municipal Councils and Local Government; the Honourable Minister, since his appointment in 2014 had promised elections of Municipal Councils, but somehow later he changed his tune and said that elections will be held once the Local Government Act is reviewed.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- I haven't changed my tune! No, no, no....

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, it is two years now.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. P. SINGH.- We do not have any response from the Minister has to how far this review has gone. Madam Speaker, the fulfilment of this promise is still a way way back.

Madam Speaker, needless to say that the FRA is now in charge of Municipal Council Roads and these roads, the Municipal Councils pay a levy to FRA but they come within the Schedule of Works. Madam Speaker, some roads are still pending in municipalities for three to four years.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Which roads?

HON. P. SINGH.- Come to Nadi, I will show you.

Madam Speaker, the ratepayers of Municipal Councils deserve better in terms of representation and I say, give on to Caesar what is Caesar's. Decentralise power, give them the right to vote and elect their own representatives. What is the Government scared of, Madam Speaker?

Finally, Madam Speaker, after listening to the tone of debate in the last four days, I repeat what I said in Parliament on 24th September, 2015, I quote:

“It is all very well to finger-wag on what should be acceptable Parliamentary conduct and what is not, but reciprocity, humanity and national interest should be our guiding values if we want succeed at bipartisanship, and not arrogance and condescension We on this side of the Parliament continue to offer our hands for bipartisanship. It is now up to the other side to reciprocate sincerity and respect in the national interest.”

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for your indulgence. May God bless Fiji.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

Honourable Members, that brings to the end the Order Paper, for our sitting day today and I thank you all for your contributions to the debate.

Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9:30am.

The Parliament adjourned at 6.17 p.m.