

## TUESDAY, 31ST MAY, 2016

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

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

### PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs and Sugar; the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs; the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports; and the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services.

### MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 30th May, 2016, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

#### Point of Clarification

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of clarification.

In the Matters Arising out of the Minutes on Page 5 of the Minutes with regard to a question that was posed to the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism yesterday, and I refer to page 1661 of yesterday's *Daily Hansard*.

Madam Speaker, I seek clarification from the Honourable Attorney-General in regards to a question that was asked yesterday, given that the Town and Country Planning Act has limitations in regards to Native Reserves and village boundaries, whether the National Building Code will now also apply to Native Reserves which are alienable Native land?

HON. SPEAKER.- I reckon the issue can be tabled as a substantive motion.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Very well, Madam.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- I accept that because it was Matters Arising from yesterday's sitting.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

## COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

### Acknowledgment of Honourable Members and Visitors in the Gallery

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to this sitting of Parliament. I also welcome another group of students from Gospel High School, and I believe another group will be here tomorrow.

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

### Meeting of the Privileges Committee

I understand that the Secretariat has been receiving queries regarding the referral of a matter of privilege to the Privileges Committee, and when this Select Committee is likely to sit.

I wish to advise that I have written to the Deputy Speaker in his capacity as Chair and referred the matter to him, pursuant to Standing Order 127(2)(b), which indicates that it is the mandate of the Committee to inquire into any complaint that may be referred to it by Parliament or the Speaker, whether under Standing Order 134 or otherwise.

Thank you.

## PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

### Standing Committee on Social Affairs Review Report on the Ministry of *i-Taukei* Affairs 2014 Annual Report

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

HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the Review Report of the Social Affairs Standing Committee on the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs' 2014 Annual Report.

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs is a standing committee which was established under Standing Order 109(2)(b) of the Standing Orders of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. The Social Affairs Standing Committee is mandated to examine matters related to health, education, social services, labour, culture, media and their administration.

The purpose of the Review was to scrutinise the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs 2014 Annual Report with regards to its performance, based on its key targeted output areas outlined in their Annual Corporate Plan, specifically on the Ministry's budget allocation, available human resources, organisational structure, administration, policies and programmes of the year.

The Social Affairs Standing Committee has conducted its review on the Ministry of *I-Taukei* Affairs 2014 Annual Report in accordance with the Ministry's key performance indicators as stipulated in the 2014 Annual Report.

The review exercise was possible after a round of consultation was conducted with the Ministry. The Committee acknowledges the Ministry's effort in providing detailed information and responded well

to some of the issues raised by the Committee during its meeting. The Committee raised few issues in the report and also recommended some of the ways that the Ministry could adopt to support and further improve its service delivery in future. Overall, the Committee commended the Ministry's performance in 2014, which they had achieved about 95.68 percent of its targeted output, and utilised about 94 percent of its total budget allocation.

Finally, I wish to extend my thanks to the Honourable Members and the Secretariat team, who were involved in the production of this bipartisan report: my Committee colleagues, Hon. Salote Radrodro, the Deputy Chairperson; Hon. Veena Bhatnagar; Hon. Anare Vadei; and Hon. Mohammed M.A. Dean.

I also wish to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the Alternate Members, who sat during the Committee meetings and on the compilation of this Report.

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

Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Chairman, please hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move:

A Motion without Notice that a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

## QUESTIONS

### Oral Questions

Reduction of Road Fatalities  
(Question No. 82/2016)

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

There is an increasing number of fatalities on our roads despite the wide publicity of the 'National Decade for Road Safety' that is currently ongoing. Can the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport inform the House on how Government proposes to effectively tackle and reduce road fatalities?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I also thank him because it gives the Government the opportunity to inform the House on what we have achieved and continues to do to ensure that our roads are safe.

Madam Speaker, in this regard, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for his understanding on this subject matter because I had stated to him that I will be making a Ministerial Statement on this subject matter on Thursday, 2nd June, 2016, which he has agreed to.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker; could the Honourable Minister tell us whether the fatalities are increasing, decreasing or stagnant?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, that is the whole reason why I have asked the Honourable Member to give me that opportunity because all the data will be in my Ministerial Statement.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, just an observation from our side; if you can clarify whether everyone knows that the maximum speed limit on our roads is 80 kilometres per hour? Are ambulance and other Government vehicles with the red and blue allowed to go beyond 80 kilometres per hour because the Police on the roadside and the LTA would allow them to go past? Can you tell us whether it is 80 kilometres per hour or is there a special speed limit for those type of vehicles?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Unfortunately, we do not have those type of vehicle that have red and blue.

Madam Speaker, as I had mentioned, all those details will be in my statement.

(Laughter)

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

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it was recently stated in the media that the illegal use of vehicles as taxis on our roads will stay and it cannot be cured in any way. This shows that our public service system in Fiji is quite in a mess and also, it is clearly one of the reasons for the increase in deaths on our roads. Can the Honourable Minister explain the position of Government in the situation of unlawful use of vehicles as public service vehicles?

HON. P. B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member. In the last sitting during tea break, I did have a discussion with him in regards to the LTA Report. All these things are being dealt with and we are expecting that by mid next month, the report will be handed over to me whereby we will implement all those issues where necessary.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I think it is a tragedy, the number of fatalities on our roads. One of the simple reasons is that, there are too many cars for a small country like Fiji and we need to manage them. Some of our boys who have been with the Military in the Middle-East have used satellite tracking systems to track the movement of vehicles over big countries, like Iraq. Would the Government consider setting up a system like that to help with Fiji because of the indiscipline on our roads?

Madam Speaker, I am surprised that it is only 60 deaths per year, but the way we are driving in this country it could be 60 deaths a day. I think something like that, Madam Speaker, could be a worthy investment to help keep the discipline, by tracking people through satellites all over Fiji.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member. The Government is equally concerned about the increase in the number of vehicles, there is no doubt about that. We are not going to have a debate on that as we are equally concerned, but that can be considered.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will go on to the next question. I will ask the Honourable Radrodro to ask his second question.

Public Service Vehicles – Nightclub Patrons  
(Question No. 83/2016)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, I hope the Honourable Minister will turn around to answer this question in the House today.

Madam Speaker, I rise to ask my question as follows:

Can the Honourable Minister or Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport inform the House on the impact of the Government's Policy that extended nightclub hours till morning, and patrons coming out of nightclubs in the early hours are not able to secure public transport vehicles, which is a contributing factor to the deaths of two youths in Samabula in recent weeks?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question posed by the Honourable Member and again, I thank him for his question. In fact, this question should have been raised with the line Minister, but I am not going to run away from the question that has been raised.

Madam Speaker, we have in Fiji only two '24 hours special zones' – the Namaka and Suva Central Business District Zones. Those two specific zones have been created to improve tourism activities and allow an increase in trading opportunities after there was a huge submission by the ordinary Fijians to do business. Micro-benefits have been noted, including an increase in the number of night food sellers and taxi businesses.

Madam Speaker, in terms of transportation, I have checked with the Suva City Council and it has been confirmed that there are enough taxis and carriers available during morning time when nightclubs are closed.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker; in regards to the provision of transportation, can the Honourable Minister inform the House whether his Ministry is in the pipeline of absorbing private providers of public service vehicles, those who are using their private rentals and private motor vehicles to be absorbed as public service vehicle providers?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, as I have said, there is enough public transportation so there is no need for private vehicles. However, for the information of the House, the Suva City Council's record shows that they are 2,044 taxis and 250 mini-van licences issued. Out of this, I am told that 20 percent do operate during the hours that we are talking about, that is, early in the morning. So, really there is no shortage of public transportation and no one has raised this to the Suva City Council, or to my office, or to LTA.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. The problem that we have is that, people who are not supposed to drive certain types of vehicles still do that, and I refer you to the Samabula case. Can the Honourable Minister assure this House that that will not happen, where a person who is not supposed to be driving a vehicle because he is not licensed and is inexperienced still drives it? Can you tell us how will you ensure that that will not happen again in the future? Do we have any answer to that?

HON. P. B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, as the Honourable Member stood up he said, "I have a problem." He has a lot of problems.

(Laughter)

I am not here to assure anything.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is not a laughing matter. People are dying.

HON. P. SINGH.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, can the Honourable Minister explain the first part of the question; what impact does the extension of nightclub hours in the two zones, that is, Namaka and Suva Central has had on the economy of Fiji?

HON. SPEAKER.- Sorry, I am not allowing that question, Honourable Prem Singh. It is really out of the bounds on the issue that has been raised and that is, on the transport or vehicle used in those hours.

Honourable Bultavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question Can the Honourable Minister consider setting up a joint committee between his Ministry, the Suva City Council, the Police and the nightclub owners, in regards to this issue? The only data that the Honourable Minister is relying on is the number of taxis and permits with the Suva City Council and the percentage in operation. That is not the reality, Madam Speaker.

Also, can the Honourable Minister consider setting up a committee in order for proper consultation to be conducted on those issues, to make sure that they are done with a proper solution and these kinds of problems do not arise where people who are not supposed to operate the vehicles are also operating? Even those who want the transport do not have access to outside-based taxis because they cannot pick passengers, even in areas like within the Suva City.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, the initial question is really questioning the Government on what is being implemented. Obviously, you are raising an initiative that will be considered by the Honourable Minister. However, Honourable Minister, do you want to answer that question?

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam, in respect of operation, we always work together with the Suva City Council, the LTA and the Police, so there is a joint operation in place. In terms of what he has suggested that those taxis operating from other bases cannot operate from the venue of nightclubs, the Honourable Member, is quite right in that sense but as I have said, there is a report that is coming up where there are some recommendations by the general public that it should be an open concept. That would really assist in what he is asking for.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Hon. Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would like to point out the reality of the situation in regards to the availability of public transportation during those hours and given the circumstances, most of the public vehicles are not able or do not want to take patrons but the real fact is, transportation is there for the public and whoever wants transportation. My question is, whether there is enough security arrangement during these hours, to be able to give confidence to public transportation like taxis, to take patrons home safely?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I hope I was the Minister for Defence or the Commissioner of Police. I think that question should be directed to the Minister for Defence.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- You are the Minister for Transport.

HON. P B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member asked about security, thank you.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Yes, different question.

HON. SPEAKER.- The question was asked and the answer was given. Thank you so much. I will now invite the Honourable Mosese Bulitavu to ask his question.

Benefits of the *Paris Agreement* for Fiji  
(Question No. 84/2016)

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

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications explain what benefits will Fiji get after signing the *Paris Agreement*?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I would like to thank him for asking his question. It goes to show that his interest in the Paris Agreement is also, by extension, his interest in climate change, which is one of the greatest issue facing the whole of humanity today.

Before I answer that, I would like to also just remind him that when we talked about ratification of the *Paris Agreement* on 12th February, the response from Honourable Gavoka, on behalf of the Opposition was that, and I quote:

“Our leader has also been at the forefront of this initiative and we applaud the work of government towards contributing to this, as part of the global community.”

And he goes on to say also and I quote:

“Yes, Madam Speaker, we fully support the ratification of the *Paris Agreement*, knowing what the world is going through today. It is very urgent that we react in this manner to help, hopefully address this threat to mankind.”

The *Paris Agreement*, Honourable Bilitavu helps us put climate change within the global arena. *Paris Agreement*, as you know, has been ratified by a number of the countries in the world, almost all of them, where they have recognised that climate change in fact, is not some hocus-pocus theory, but indeed is actually a fact, a reality. The greenhouse emission is, in fact, a reality and that seas are actually rising and that there are countries that will actually be submerged in a few years' time, not only Small Island States, but also countries like Bangladesh. With the current rate that sea levels are rising, 17 percent of that will go underwater, countries like Netherlands, of course, face challenges.

So, the *Paris Agreement*, in terms of our benefit, is essentially to bring home that awareness. There is also then the issue about the commitments made by the various countries in actually reducing the greenhouse emissions. That in itself is a benefit for us, because whilst we are one of the lowest contributors to carbon emissions in the world (in fact, Fiji's output is 0.004 percent, in comparison to the rest of the world) we, in Fiji, like the other Pacific island countries are at the forefront or the cold face of climate change. We have already relocated three villages, there have been about 62 villages that have already been identified that in the next few years will need to be relocated.

Now, part of climate change also involves, not just the relocation of villages but also how we do provide for them to sustain livelihoods. There is no point in simply moving a village, but we need to see whether we can have fish farms, crab farms, et cetera, for them to sustain livelihoods. That is part of what we call the "adaptation measures".

The *Paris Agreement*, what it also has done, it has made a commitment on behalf of the developed countries of the world, and I quote from Article 4 of the Agreement:

"Scale of financial resources to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation and the need for public and grant based resources for adaptation, particularly for Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States".

That is actually in the text of the *Paris Agreement*. So there is a recognition and as we know, Madam Speaker, there is also a fund that has been set up that is called the "Green Climate Fund" which, in fact, Fiji has already benefitted from. As part of the adaptation measures, the Water Authority of Fiji has a very big five year plan for the implementation of water reticulation system, in particular in the Nausori-Suva corridor. It is in excess of about \$250 million project over five years. We put that up as a proposal to the Green Climate Fund and they have in fact committed through the ADB, a grant of about \$32 million. So, that is a grant, it is not a loan and it is going to be implemented towards this water reticulation system for the greater Suva-Nausori area.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, there are other forms of finance that is available, some of it is obviously by way of soft loans and some of it by way of grants. Also, it does resonate and highlight the need for building resilient economies. As highlighted, Madam Speaker, we have talked about that in the same way yesterday about building standards and building codes, similarly we need to talk about infrastructure. Those of us who have visited the North West of Viti Levu, for example, you would have seen the electrical poles, either they were snapped out or tilting to one side, as the FEA CEO had talked about that 9,000 kilometres of electrical cables that needed to be checked before they could go live.

The reality though is, if you put those poles back up again and if we have another *Cyclone Winston* in two years' time, we will be doing the same thing over again, in terms of resilience, in terms of adaptation, we are looking at measures to how to perhaps, go terrestrial. In other words, go underground. We cannot underground all the cables at once because it costs a lot of money. The reality is, Madam Speaker, as we have done, for example, underground cabling when you come out of Nadi Airport, you do not see any overhead electrical cables. Similarly, we need to do that with the trunk roots, it is expensive, it is an expensive proposition but in the long run, it could turn out to be inexpensive because you are not going to



be always repairing poles. So, this is part of the Paris Agreement issues that have come out, which we want to be able to highlight in the international forum.

Fiji has also, Madam Speaker, made a commitment to reduce its carbon emissions by 30 percent by 2030. Notwithstanding the fact that our carbon footprint is quite low, we still make this pledge to reduce our carbon footprint. This is why, for example, Madam Speaker, you now see and we have talked about the number of new vehicles on the roads, we have zero rated duty on cars that do not use fossil fuel. You can see a lot of hybrid cars that are on the road because it has become inexpensive. We would rather have more cars such as those, as opposed to cars that completely use fossil fuels. So, these are part of the commitments that we have made, and the Paris Agreement, Madam Speaker, is also to help us raise that awareness both in Fiji and, of course, offshore.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- May I raise a supplementary question, Madam Speaker?

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, the Honourable Ratu Isoa.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- In your own words, you said that the islands are slowly submerging, I suppose that also includes the Fiji Islands. My concern is, have you been able to look at the main lands in Fiji - Vanua Levu and Viti Levu, and already calculated to assign people in our various Fiji Islands, if that happens, that they are assigned to the main land, our own people? However, it looks like there is a push to accommodate others in the various islands of the Pacific to come in, and when that time comes there is no space for our own people. What I am requesting, or whether you are working on making sure that our various islands that are slowly submerging have a place on the main land, to actually relocate our people, before you open the gates to others?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Honourable Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, of course, any right-thinking government will always give priority to its own citizens. As I had highlighted in my earlier response, we have already identified 63 villages that are prone to be either submerged or large encroaching bodies of water into those villages. We have already relocated three villages, and Fiji is lucky, compared to some of the other Pacific Island countries because we also have large areas of high levels above sea level. Tuvalu's highest peak above sea level is 12 feet.

Yes, there are some islands in Fiji that are obviously quite low, and which are inhabited. Out of the 330 or 320 odd islands, 110 islands in Fiji are inhabited. So, it is about a third, and most definitely the 63 villages that we have identified include all of those villages and other areas where people live, where they will need to be relocated. Now, of course, they will be.

In respect of us giving an opportunity for others to come in, that obviously will take place in its own course of time, but in the meantime, of course, we will be looking after our own people.

HON. SPEAKER.- I will give the floor to the Honourable Salote Radrodoro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. We acknowledge the efforts by Fiji in having to be the first country to sign the Paris Agreement, and we also recognise the contribution by ADB. However, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister that, in view of the absence of short-term and mid-term financial support in the Paris Agreement, how much has Fiji been provided with by developed countries that contribute to the 55 percent of emissions, like Japan and the European countries? How much are those countries contributing to Fiji, to pursue domestic mitigation and adaptation activities to address impacts of climate change?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, in February, the Opposition said that they agreed with the Paris Agreement, and I am sure when they agreed to the ratification of the Paris Agreement, hopefully they would have read the Paris Agreement because the Paris Agreement quite specifically enunciates exactly the obligations and duties of the various parties to this particular Agreement. If the Honourable Member reads the Agreement, then she would have the answer in there, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker, in regards to this Paris Agreement, can the Honourable Minister tell us how we are going to access the climate change?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Funds.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The access to climate finance, Madam Speaker, is something that we have been highlighting in the past couple of months. We, for example, said that we had some funds of about \$32-odd million through the Green Climate Fund, through ADB. The reason why it went through ADB is because you have to have what they call, 'certified institutions' that can actually access those funds. Fiji has put up the Fiji Development Bank (FDB) as the financial institution that should be the competent authority in Fiji to be able to access those funds and then be able to channel those funds, either to the private sector or to the Government. That certification process, Madam Speaker, we hope will be completed by the end of this year. The Green Climate Fund Board meets in Samoa later on this year, and FDB should be given the tick.

I would like to thank the Honourable Member for this question because Climate Fund goes on to what Honourable Radrodro was perhaps, alluding to. The availability of climate finance, Madam Speaker, there a number of different methodologies or different agencies through which you can access those funds. As we have highlighted in the past three months in the international forums, that to be able to access those funds is overly bureaucratic, in fact, none of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs).

Recently, when I was in Germany at the ADB Meeting (and I am going to give a Ministerial Statement on that), we had side meetings with the Finance Ministers from Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands and various other PICs where we all essentially agreed that the bureaucracy around that is quite a feat to navigate through. There is not enough capacity within the smaller island States, not just in the Pacific but also in countries, like in the Indian Ocean and even in the Caribbean, where they do not have the internal capacity to be able to access that. This is why we have been advocating for a centralised training centre, where we have Small Island States coming together, to be able to know how to navigate through this whole Green Climate Finance sphere.

Madam Speaker, like I have said, we are also putting words out. As we have highlighted, we also want to do it through the budgetary process and we have said to the different agencies, not just Government Ministries, to have a five year plan, which we can then submit as part of our adaptation measures, and be able to hopefully get funding for that to be able to meet some of the challenges arising from climate change.

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

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- We understand, Madam Speaker, that the Paris Agreement is the initiative of the global family to find solutions and also a platform for assisting countries in the world that need assistance from the effect of climate change.

When we talk about natural phenomenon, Madam Speaker, we talk about natural law, and natural law points to our moral conduct towards the Creator of heaven and earth. Madam Speaker, all these phenomenon is controlled by the Creator. A direct testimony on this, Madam Speaker, is seen in Dravuvalu Village on the island of Totoya in Lau, where the effect of climate change is enormously eroding their

shores, and their solution was to turn to the Creator. They went through fasting and praying. The sea, Madam Speaker, brought the sand from the ocean and buried all those places. My question to the Honourable Minister, whether they are in a position to think about going towards that direction?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the fasting month starts on Monday, I am going to be fasting from Monday. If that is what he is talking about, I do not know what your question is?

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, as the Honourable Minister has highlighted, climate change will create climate change refugees. We understand that down the line, Fiji will one day take in these refugees. We are Christians, we are neighbours but, Madam Speaker, before taking these refugees, is there a package that this Government has (if we have established a package) to take to the global community and say; "Look, we are taking in so many thousands of people, what are you contributing to Fiji, to help us make them part of us, that is, roads, water, and electricity?" There is a cost to taking in the refugees, Madam Speaker, and I wonder if Government has a package that it will take to the global community to say; "We will take them in, this is what we need, as a country, to enable us to take in these refugees."

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the question. The taking in of refugees is a bit further down the track. We have made a philosophical commitment to this, but obviously it is not going to happen in five or ten years' time, it will happen much further down. We have said that our priority, of course, is firstly to be able to look after our own people.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, this is part of what we are taking about, to plan ahead, to put together project proposals to the international community, and should that time come, Madam Speaker, of course, we will be putting proposals to the global community. Indeed, we have had many positive responses from entities like the European Union and European Commission, who are very much part and parcel of the new way of thinking, pertaining to climate change and climate mitigation measures, indeed adaptation measures. Indeed, they have been very grateful of the commitment that has been made by the Honourable Prime Minister, in respect of our willingness to help these people but, of course, it will take a lot of planning.

If you read the discourse on this, even in Fiji, as we have already highlighted, there are many legal issues as well. In the budgetary allocation, which the Honourable Members, I am sure would have seen in the 2016 Budget, we had allocated some funding to look at exploring the legal issues pertaining to, for example, things like climate change refugees, not only in the Pacific per se but generally. In fact, we have already had discussions earlier this year with the Singaporeans and various other countries where we want to eke out some of these legal issues that have not necessarily been addressed in the Paris Agreement, but which will become legal issues in the future.

There are, for example other legal issues pertaining to, in the case of a country like Tuvalu, for example, if certain islands submerge and go beneath the waters, what happens to their territorial rights? No one has really thought about if the land no longer exists or the land is submerged beneath the water, what happens to their territorial rights? What happens to the measurement of the EEZ zone from those areas when the countries are actually, are submerged?

Those are a number of legal issues, Madam Speaker, that need to be eked out in the legal platform and Fiji is obviously contributing towards that, and there are many such issues that need to be eked out before we can arrive at that position that we had discussed earlier on.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we had had more than three questions allocated for that question, I will have to limit supplementary questions on that particular question for today.

I will now give the floor to the Honourable Viliame Gavoka to ask his question.

Dredging Works – Sigatoka River & Tuva River  
(Question No. 85/2016)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, I will give a bit of background, if you go to Sigatoka today, during low tide, our youth will be seen playing rugby on the Sigatoka River. And in the Tuva River, any rain, the people of Kabisi, Semo, Nabau and Nalele are all showing great anxiety because of how shallow the rivers have become and it is quite critical.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management; what is Government doing about dredging the Sigatoka and Tuva Rivers because of their state now - they flood very easily and could threaten the communities in my province?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management) .- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question by the Honourable Member and I thank him for the question.

Madam Speaker, high siltage in rivers in Fiji is very much related to land use practice. Nadroga is one of the high intensive agricultural areas, likewise forestry and other extractive industries, and thus the contribution to high soil erosion, therefore, the high level of siltage in the Nadroga areas and, of course, the Sigatoka and Tuva Rivers.

However, the simple answer is that, dredging for Sigatoka River is due to start this year. It was advertised, the tenders were out in December last year, but because of the re-prioritisation because of *TC Winston*, that is being put on hold but we are ready to proceed again. Again, because of the financial year, that has been part of our budget submission again. It will be done in three stages, and we hope to extract about 1,200,000m<sup>2</sup> of siltage. The first stage will be undertaken in 2016/2017 period, involving the first 3.5 kilometres from the bridge to the river mouth. That is due to start this year.

Tuva River, Madam Speaker, is in Priority 2, right now the scoping is being undertaken by the Ministry as well. The priority is in the major towns, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- A supplementary question, Honourable Ro Teimumu.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, on the Rewa River, we have not had a flood for the last 10 years, we are very lucky but there is very high siltation now during the past few years. With the shallowness of the rivers, the women are very concerned about their food supply in terms of *moci*, *qari*, *mana*, et cetera, Madam Speaker, which they would like to feed their families with. My question to the Honourable Minister is, because this came up during the *Tikina* Council meetings and also in the provincial council meetings over the past few years as to the dredging, when they sent the dredge along, they did not go through the proper procedures and sometimes, it is sitting there for a month or two and nothing is happening, and my concern is also on the Rewa River.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I have visited the Rewa River dredging and right down the river mouth in Vutia. The engineers have different views on each engineering solution, Madam Speaker, not to an ecological solution.

The siltage in the river mouth is now building up again in the Vutia delta. That, Madam Speaker, was after the initial dredging that was undertaken by the Chinese, engineers have to again do a study on the effects of that dredging.

I have been taken to the river mouth, of course, we are aware of the implications. Definitely, like any other development, there are implications as well but we await the assessment so that we can come up with the next possible solution to address the issues, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker, my question is in regards to Nadi Town. What are the programmes your Ministry has in place, in terms for the Nadi River?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, in my response to the initial question by Honourable Gavoka, I did mention that Tuva River is in the Priority 2 List. All the major towns in Fiji, Madam Speaker, are in our Priority 1 because of macro-economic resilience. There are a lot of population, a lot of industries and a lot of economic activities within the major townships and that is why all major towns, including cities in Fiji, are in the Priority 1 List.

We have undertaken dredging in the Labasa, Navua and Rewa Rivers and, of course, dredging in the Sigatoka River is about to start. For the Ba River mouth, Madam Speaker, that is being put on hold because of the magnetite extraction that is currently being processed. The Ministry of Lands is working on the lease because magnetite is present in the Ba River mouth. There has been some discussions if Ba can be on hold, but I come back to Nadi, which was the specific question raised. I know that most of the Honourable Members of the House would be aware that there was an exercise undertaken by the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) way back in the 1980s about Nadi River diversion. That exercise was undertaken when there was not much development in the Nadi area but if you go to Nadi now, Madam Speaker, to Denarau and Fantasy Island, a lot of developments have taken place.

Madam Speaker, Government, after the flooding in 2012, *Cyclone Evans* revisited that project and again, it asked the Japanese Government if they can assist. The Japanese Government since 2012, has been doing all the technical scoping. My Ministry has been assured that the report will be ready this July, but the conclusion they have come up with, Madam Speaker, is that it is no longer viable for Nadi Town to go through a river diversion. That is the Saunaka River, through Enamanu, next to McDonalds and that is where the river should have been diverted. Now, they are coming up with a new solution on river widening and some realignment. So, we will have the report by July this year and then we should be able to know from the technical scoping, how much does it cost and then Government will consider financing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his answers this morning. The Honourable Minister is also the Minister for Disaster Management and Agriculture.

Dredging, Madam Speaker, is only the outcome of human activities up in the river and agricultural activities, which have chemicals go down to the rivers and have piled up in years. My question will be based on the theory of environmental economics. What are the options that the Ministry of Agriculture has in regards to this problem where other alternatives, given the concept of climate change that we have now that there is a likelihood that we could diversify into other economic activities to reduce these kind of threats to our communities and to our nature?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, the question raised by the Honourable Member is probably linked to the next question that will be raised by the Honourable Niumataiwalu this morning. I have talked about engineering solutions, there are also ecological solutions which are more preferable and are recommended as well. However, like any other development activity, it comes with the price and these involve risks. It can be reduced, transferred, mitigated and it can be managed as well. If the Honourable Member can allow me to probably tackle that question in the next question that will be raised in this morning's Order Paper, because land resources also include water.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now given the floor to the Honourable Niumataiwalu.

Degradation and Threat to Sustainable Livelihood  
(Question No. 86/2016)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management explain how land degradation threatens the sustainable livelihood of future generations with the continuing decrease in arable land and soil in Fiji?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, let me define 'land degradation', according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) definition.

Madam Speaker, as I have stated in my response to the Honourable Bilitavu's question, land degradation is not only limited to land and soil, it includes other land-based resources. So, land degradation can be described as how land resources (soil, water, vegetation and climate) have changed for the worst, so because of development, most of our resources are changing for the worst.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about sustainable development these days, there are three major issues, they are:

1. Food security because of land degradation;
2. Energy, also because of land degradation, forestry and climate; and
3. Water resources.

So, this is why land degradations is a major concern and is also a major issue as far as sustainable development is concerned because land degradation, according to the definition, is not only about land and soil, it is about resources that are very connected and closely related to land resources. As I have stated, soil, water, vegetation and climate.

Madam Speaker, how does this threaten the sustainable livelihood of future generations? This is in so many ways, but I am just limiting it to a few and one is food security. It is very, very important because when soil is changing to the worst and I will give one example. Right now in Taveuni, we have a big problem, that is, the depletion of soil fertility because farming in Taveuni is continuous. They harvest yaqona, they plant dalo. They harvest dalo, they plant cassava. There is no time given for the land to fallow and replenish itself. That is husbandry practice and also sustainable land management practice.

We have a serious problem now in Taveuni. This is about land changing to worst conditions because of depleting soil fertility, and it has affected our export level as well. When I was the Divisional

Commissioner Northern, Madam Speaker, the rejection for dalo in Taveuni was 10 to 15 percent but now, it is 30 per cent to 40 percent. So, we are looking at ways in which we can address that issue very quickly. So, one of the threat is that, it threatens food security, and that is how it is going to affect the future livelihood.

The second threat which is related to food security is biodiversity because on land we have forests, water and everything, and we talk about biodiversity. The different birds, the food chain and everything, so this is how it is going to affect the future generation as well.

Madam Speaker, because of that (and this will probably be my last answer to this), economic security will also be affected because most of our people are rural-based, agro-based and their livelihood is agriculture. When land, vegetation, soil and climate are threatened, it affects income well.

On a security perspective, Madam Speaker, we just completed the World Humanitarian Summit, so when these issues, like water, climate and food are affected, there will be a lot of movements and that can threaten security or impinge on security to some extent. So, that is my response to the question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A supplementary question; could the Honourable Minister outline what measures are there that are already in place, to stop this threat?

HON. LT.COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

The first one is about individual responsibility. Let us all take ownership - farmers, fishermen, villagers or leaders, let us all take ownership because it affects all of us. The Government has a role, and Government is not working in isolation. Under the UN umbrella, Madam Speaker, we have what we call the United National Convention for the Combat of Degradation (UNCCD) and Fiji is aligned under UNCCD.

In terms of funding, Madam Speaker, apart from funding that is allocated to resource-based sectors in Fiji, we are working with the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) as well to get some funding. The measures, Madam Speaker, again goes back to sustainable land use and management practice.

The Honourable Kiliraki, in our session, highlighted most of the issues that we are facing in Fiji, and of course in one of the later sittings of Parliament this year, Madam Speaker, we will discuss the Land Use Policy and the Act that is coming. We must admit the fact that the arrangement right now in our legislations is very loose. There is only a certain clause in the lease document that talks about husbandry practice, which is very weak, we need to review that and we have the Land Use Policy and the Act that is coming. We will have a look at that in detail so that we can address this issue and, of course, look at sustainable development in the future.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Isoa, supplementary question.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes, thank you. There are certainly some issues on the rotation of crops in Taveuni and yet you still have some problems in regards to the produce coming out of that land. But let us see the sugar areas after Nausori, Vanua Levu and whole of the West, sugar, is it suffering from the same land degradation and if it is, should sugar be continued as the main crop in this country?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, husbandry practices go across the board, irrespective of the commodity, the practice that you are involved in, whether you are livestock farmer, whether you are a vegetable farmer or a crop farmer and sugar is also included in this. Again, as I have stated, Madam Speaker, the arrangement is very loose.

Let me give an example, contour planting. There are certain ways in which we should do cropping on hill slopes and there are even gradients where we are not supposed to plant at all. This is where soil erosion is happening and that is why, in my response to one of the earlier questions, Madam Speaker, we should take all responsibility. Farmers, you should practice good sustainable land management, so that we minimise erosion. That does not mean, Madam Speaker, that we cannot use the hills. There are ways in which we can mitigate that through agro-forestry. The use of *vertiver* grass and other deep-rooted species that are around that can control soil erosion in these places, but definitely sugar, we need the sugar industry but it is about advocacy, it is about changing the mindset; it is about taking responsibility because if the risk is involved, the risk can be managed and the risk can be reduced. That is where sustainable land management practice comes in, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we continue to ask this question that we have all these plans and we have all these studies, but implementation is all always lacking on the ground level.

We talked about support system, I think the best way of explaining this is 'hand holding'. When we implement something and it is new, you hold people's hand and guide them through what you want to accomplish. We can talk about many things but the weakness with government, Madam Speaker, building standards and good husbandry is no hand holding. They are not there to hold their hands while they are trying to implement. They come up with wonderful plans but no support system, please if you want good husbandry, set in place a good support system and hold their hands to accomplish what you want them to accomplish.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Question.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- What are you doing about building up a support system for Agriculture, Madam Speaker, and I have often spoken about the FSC model.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I think, Madam Speaker, it is very hard to get across.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, you may have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I invite the Honourable Member as you drive past Korovisilou...

(Laughter)

...after this session, on the hill, there is a demonstration farm for the farmers in the Serua area on sustainable land management. We are working with the Ministry of Education, we are starting now from primary schools on sustainable land management practice, Madam Speaker. And there are a few more....

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.



HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. This issue, Madam Speaker, did not just occur recently, it has been occurring for the last years....

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- How many years?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- For the last 10 years.

(Laughter)

The solutions being offered by the Honourable Minister are all short-term solutions. My question is, has the Government come up with a national plan to be followed in the future, to curb these problems? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- No plan.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, like the Chinese proverb that says, “if we looking at short-term solutions we plant rice, if we are looking at mid-term solutions, we plant trees and if we are looking at long-term solutions, cultivate the people”, and that is what we are doing, Madam Speaker.

(Laughter)

We are starting from the primary schools, we are doing all the advocacy, we can have the best laws, we can have the best plans, but it takes people to sustain development, Madam Speaker. So we are cultivating the people, that is the long-term solution.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, we will now move on to the next question and I invite the Honourable Ruveni Nadalo to take the floor.

Reconstruction Works at Queen Victoria School  
(Question No. 87/2016)

HON. R.N. NADALO asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts explain the progress on the reconstruction works at Queen Victoria School?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I want to thank him for asking the question.

Madam Speaker, apart from the adversities, *Cyclone Winston* has also provided us with opportunities, in this case, to construct and replace old and aging infrastructure.

Queen Victoria School (QVS) is a signature school to us and this has now given us an opportunity to get a brand `state of the art` infrastructure out there. As you aware, Madam Speaker, the Government of Indonesia has decided to fund the reconstruction of the school. At the moment, we have 30 Indonesian Army Engineers on the site, 15 Republic of Fiji Military Forces Engineers are there as well and they are travelling daily to the site, and another 33 Engineers from Indonesia who are supposed to come this week.

Madam Speaker, the Indonesian Army Engineers Reconstruction Team works in two shifts. Shift one is at 7.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. and the other shift is at 7.15 p.m. to 10.00 p.m., which is seven days a week. Our own engineers are working daily during the day to assist the team on the ground.

The scope of the work to be done, Madam Speaker:

- chapel - has been constructed and completed last week;
- hostel - they are now looking at totally demolishing the existing hostel, the remains of it, and constructing a two-storey hostel;
- 13 classrooms - they will construct one main administration block which was destroyed quite badly;
- demolish and construct the main administration block
- the current washroom will be done;
- three laboratories which was devastated badly, that is, the biology, chemistry and physics laboratories;
- the computer laboratory will be done which was also damaged badly;
- the staff room, they will do completely;
- a book room; and
- four special rooms, for example, the PEMAC room, the Music room, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned that they have completed the chapel and now the next phase is to get into these infrastructure - the classrooms, ablution blocks, laboratories and the administrative block. At the moment, they are working on the hostel, demolishing the hostel, and by the end of this week, they will start the construction work.

The target of the whole project, Madam Speaker, to complete it by end of August and at the moment by the look of it, they are on target, the timeframe that has been set. Earlier on, you may have heard me and also read in the print media that we said that the chapel will be completed by end of May and it has been done, in fact it was completed a week before, so we are slightly ahead of the schedule.

Madam Speaker, they have received from Indonesia, excavator, trucks, generator, water blaster, concrete mixing tools and infrastructure tools. They are looking at getting 70 percent of the material from Indonesia and 30 percent from the local market. The reason being that we are running short of material in the local market, we do not want to cannibalise on the existing stock that we have, which is in high demand at the moment.

Madam Speaker, the other 70 army engineers will arrive probably in two days' time and the engineers from our own military, the RFMF team have assured us of beefing up whatever additional engineers we may need, the Ministry is willing to provide our own army engineers.

Madam Speaker, we have also provided them assistance, our people on the ground can call on a daily but we make a weekly visit to see if they need any assistance, to ensure that there are no bottlenecks. I must say that the Honourable Minister for Local Government and his staff, and the Honourable Minister for Defence, all of them are assisting to ensure that there is no hindrance to their work on the ground. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I give the floor to the Honourable Tupou Draunidalo.

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. My supplementary question to the Honourable Minister is, how much have these 20 pieces of silver helped to seal your Government's mouth on the issue of genocide in West Papua, and why has the Government not sought assistance from

other Governments like the British Government if it required, or a Commonwealth country to build a school named after Queen Victoria?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, it is a totally irrelevant question but I just want to say that the Adopt a School Project is open to anyone. Anyone can go to the homepage, go to the site and express their interest to take up a particular school just like the Chinese students did last week, they took the Yasawa High School. Australians have taken 26 schools, the New Zealand Government, as well as Japan. HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I give the floor to the Honourable Nabulivou.

HON. A. NABULIVOU.- Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Honourable Minister, will classes resume in Term 3 in QVS?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, our target is to complete before the end of Term 2 and we will reassess the situation. We are looking at giving an option to the students if they want to come back to the campus. We are happy to start Term 3 there.

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

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, that was the same question I wanted to ask.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you Madam Speaker. May I ask the Honourable Minister, why was Indonesia chosen ahead of Australia and New Zealand to build QVS?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I have just said that Australia gave their own list of schools. The schools at the moment are ACAP schools, and in addition to another four schools. They have decided to adopt those schools, we do not dictate to them which schools they should adopt. The Government of Indonesia chose to take up QVS, just like New Zealand, they had given us a list of schools, similar to the Government of Japan.

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

Offshore Fisheries Management Decree 2012 and Regulation 2014  
(Question No. 88/2016)

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

As the Offshore Fisheries Management Decree 2012 and the Offshore Fisheries Regulation 2014 are in effect, can the Honourable Minister brief this House if they are being effectively enforced?

HON. O. NAIQAMU (Minister for Fisheries and Forests).- Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the question asked by the Honourable Member and I thank him for the question.

Madam Speaker, the Offshore Fisheries Management Decree 2012 and the Offshore Fisheries Management Regulation 2014 are two very important tools to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. These legal instruments were developed in order to ensure that the highly migratory fish stock such as tuna and bluefin are sustainably managed.

Madam Speaker, these two documents enable the Fisheries Department to manage offshore fisheries stocks in a structured manner and in accordance with international standards. The legislation, Madam Speaker, also takes into account Fiji's regional and international obligation such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), Conservation and Management Measures (CMMs), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), to name a few.

Madam Speaker, following the promulgation of the Offshore Decree and Regulation, the Fisheries Department's Monitoring Control and Enforcement, Surveillance and Investigation Units was increased to a number of 25 authorised officers. These officers, Madam Speaker, were recruited under the present Government's recognition for the need to effectively combat IUU fishing. This 25-member Unit works within the ambit of these two documents and in co-operation with line ministries, the Fiji Navy, regional entities such as the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (PIFFA), the WCPFC and its member nations.

Madam Speaker, all these agencies collectively enforce the Offshore Decree and Regulation in order to ensure the effective monitoring of national and foreign vessels that fish within Fiji's fisheries waters, in the neighbouring Exclusive Economic Zones and the high seas. Various activities are monitored under the Offshore Decree and Regulation, and this legislation allows transparent and vigorous licencing process, vessel monitoring system, boarding and inspection activities of designated ports, observer placements on fishing vessels, port sampling and port monitoring activities through the active enforcement of Ports State measures under the Offshore Decree.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, Fiji co-ordinates to boost its efforts in the development of catch documentation and verification systems which have ensured the proper tracking of tuna products to the standard of the European Union and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT).

Madam Speaker, in the year 2016, with the introduction of the fish penalty notices, authorised officers are now able to enforce the requirements under these two documents against offences and charges, specific to non-compliance against the conditions put forward. These have resulted in cases being either taken to court or being settled outside of the court system through payment of the stipulated fines within the fixed ....

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- May I rise on a Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I say this with respect, Madam Speaker, but could a ruling be made in relation to the answers that are coming from the Honourable Ministers on the other side because the Standing Orders is very clear, that answers must be concise and precise. If the Honourable Ministers want to give a statement they can do that, but the Standing Order is very clear on what the answer should be, it should be concise, precise and to the point. So could a ruling be made on that?

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Minister is providing the answer the best way that he can and we will allow him to do that. Thank you, Honourable Minister please continue.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, thank you, I think my answer is concise and to the point.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Then do not read.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- This enforcement process is a continuous cycle, Madam Speaker. Current and recruited observers continue to attend capacity building under the PIFFA making all enforcements effective and consistent. These observers are often attached to neighbouring Pacific Island countries on enforcement, monitoring, surveillance and investigation exercises, both at the national and regional levels.

Ultimately, Madam Speaker, the Department has and shall endeavour to effectively regulate the fishing industry and its stakeholders under the Offshore Fisheries Management Decree 2012 and the Offshore Fisheries Management Regulation 2014, in an effort to market and ensure that Fiji is a complying nation operating with international standards.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question, Honourable Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker; Fiji's EEZ covers an area of 1,229,728 square kilometres. My question is, what is the result in terms of this Decree, the success rate of the arrest of illegal fishing to-date as alluded to by the Honourable Minister, the relevant stakeholders that are involved in the monitoring and the surveillance of this huge area, what is the success rate?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, for the information of the House the success rate is more than 90 percent. Thank you.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Dean.

HON. M.M.A. DEAN.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Can the Minister elaborate if any foreign vessels have been imposed penalties if they fail to comply with the regulations? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, any foreign vessel that does not comply with our legislation has been taken into task and being penalised according to our laws.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can the Honourable Minister explain to us that in the last year, how many vessels were arrested?

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, that question is statistical in nature, I can produce it to the House at a later sitting date.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Dulakivareta.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I thank the Minister for his response. My question is, does the Fiji Government pay any fees to all these stakeholders to police the EEZ?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, all those agencies are being tasked to work with Government to carry out the activities of policing our EEZ.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of order.

HON. A.T. VADEL.- Under Standing Order 44 (11), the six months has not lapsed, this question appeared on 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2016 and it has appeared again in this session. Thank you.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- It is in the Hansard.

HON. A.T. VADEL.- Same question, same Minister.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Could I have the clarification from the Minister for Industry Trade and Tourism, if this question was in fact asked previously, less than six months ago?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, may he read out the relevant paragraph in *Daily Hansard*, if he is saying that it was six months ago.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please, read the question in the *Daily Hansard* Report.

HON. A.T. VADEL.- I quote:

“With the increase in the number of Agro Based Co-operatives registered, can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism explain to this House what the Ministry has put in place to support these co-operative entities to reach export readiness level?”

This is word by word.

HON. SPEAKER.- It is very clear that the question had been asked less than six months ago and the question will now not be asked.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, we will now go on to the written question.

### Written Questions

Number of Logging Licences for 2014 – 2015  
(Question No. 90/2016)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forests inform this House on the number of logging licenses so far for the 2014-2015 period, and provide a breakdown on all of its recipients?

HON. O. NAIQAMU (Minister for Fisheries and Forests).- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the question. The total number of logging licenses issued in 2014....

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- It will be provided at a later sitting date, it is a written question.

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

Road Maintenance Work – Kadavu  
(Question No. 91/2016)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport advise this House as to when will the road maintenance work and the construction of the new Yawe, Tawava, Talaulia and Nasau Roads commence on the island of Kadavu?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Madam Speaker, I rise to answer the question raised by the Honourable Member and I thank him for his question.

Madam Speaker, I will table my answer at a later sitting date, as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, that brings the end to question time in our Order Paper and I think it is time that we break for refreshments.

Parliament is now adjourned until 11.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.57 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.30 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will resume from where we left off in the Order Paper.

The next Item on the Order Paper is Ministerial Statements. The Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Finance, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications and the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts have all given notice to make Ministerial Statements under Standing Order 34.

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

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

### **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

#### 49th ADB Board of Governors Annual Meeting

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, this morning, I would like to give a Ministerial Statement regarding the 49th Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Board of Governors that was held in Frankfurt, Germany from 2nd May to 5th May, 2016 at which we had several bilateral meetings also.

Madam Speaker, the Annual Meeting was attended by over 3,000 participants, including Governors and their respective delegations from Member Countries, representatives from Multilateral Organisations, bilateral institutions, business leaders, academics and members of the global financial community and civil society.

On the first day, Madam Speaker, the Governors of the Pacific Development Member Countries (PDMC), and these are the Governors, Ministers are generally called Governors within the ADB speak, met with the ADB Management, where Fiji raised the following key issues.

Firstly, the vulnerable status of PDMC, of course, including other vulnerable Island States and the devastation and the loss of lives through *Cyclone Winston*, demonstrated the high vulnerability of Pacific Member Countries to natural disasters, and how years of development could, in fact, be wiped out by one climatic event.

Secondly, accessing climate change finance, Madam Speaker, as alluded to earlier on this morning, the PDMC also wanted to consider a collective proposal, to look at regional or multi-country approach in accessing climate financing as we have highlighted in a number of meetings internationally recently that a number of climate finance facilities are available, only if the projects are what they call 'bankable.' Many small island countries do not have necessarily bankable projects – bankable in this sense, it must have the Economies of Scale (ES). So, when they, for example, go and provide solar panels or solar energy farming, they do not want just a few panels here and there, they look for thousands of acres of solar panels being installed, and only then, it becomes a bankable project.

What we said was that, you cannot, in any time, have a bankable project in any of the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) because we are small. I mean, Fiji is considered the second largest island nation state and we are not even one million people. The largest, being Papua New Guinea, which is about eight million



and the next is Fiji. Most of the other PICs are about a couple hundred thousand or two hundred thousands, therefore, it is not bankable projects. So what Fiji has proposed that in order for us to have a bankable project, let us put countries together to create a bankable project, so we could put in a submission as five or six countries together to create a bankable project and that is what we are pushing together with ADB.

Some of the other issues, Madam Speaker, that we highlighted was, of course, the mainstreaming of climate financing with development financing. Really, there should be no segregation between development finance and climate finance. In fact, for countries like Fiji, many other island states and indeed low island countries, development actually means climate financing. So, they are integrated, they should not be segregated, and there should be no demarcation.

Training and capacity building of PDMCs is critical as the requisite skills base is harnessed in the PDMCs, to enable member countries to successfully access climate finance, implement projects and programmes, and setting up appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In this context, Madam Speaker, I would also like to highlight one of the issues that we have been raising with many of these multilateral funding agencies and multilateral development banks is the necessity in their procurement requirements to always have an economic analysis always done on projects. What we have raised with them is that you should not have to do an economic analysis when you have to rebuild a bridge.

Madam Speaker, for example, if there is a river or a creek in which you have had Irish Crossing for the past 20, 30, 50 years and there are about five villages on the other side of the creek, if we are going to get financing for them, if the bridge has been washed away, one of the procurement requirements is that we have to carry out an economic assessment as to whether that bridge is necessary or not. We are saying; "The bridge was there, obviously there is necessity. Why go and spend another couple of hundred thousand dollars just to pay a consultant" to say; "Yes, it is economically viable" because those five villages actually need access to markets. So, these are some of the ways which we are trying to get them to change the procurement requirements, in particular if you are going to do a rebuild of infrastructure programmes.

We also talked about private sector development. Given the small economic base in the ES, we also met with the ADB's investment arms in the development of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and we hope to make some announcements in the budget regarding a concerted national effort towards Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). At the moment, one would like different agencies dealing with microfinance, SME financing and also oversight of that. We would like to have a national approach to that. We had a discussion with the SMEs arm of ADB and how the SMEs can actually become a much greater catalyst for providing economic vibrance and robustness within the economy.

We also talked about the review of the development of finance disbursements. Given that PDMs are becoming increasingly vulnerable to adverse climate events and our current financial progress is under immense threat, it is noted that vulnerability and fragility is typically ignored or left out of the modality of development finance disbursements. So, for example, a country like Fiji, which is considered to be a medium income country, with an average depending on which agency you speak to, they say our average income is GDP per capita is about USD4500. Now, that puts us in the middle income bracket, therefore, we are not able to access financing at much cheaper rates as to what Least Developed Countries (LDCs) would get.

In other words, you actually get punished for doing well, but at the same time, the vulnerability levels are there because you could have one climatic event that could wipe out all that development. So, there is this whole debate going on, this is something that Fiji is actually pushing in the international sphere to say; "Look, you need to have other forms of measures or measurability to assess the vulnerability of the economy and whether they should be able to get access to cheaper finance or not."

Madam Speaker, we had some very good bilateral meetings also, but prior to that, we gave a written statement that was submitted by the Fijian Government to the ADB Board of Governors, which

was submitted by the PDMC which is through Cooks Islands. Cook Islands was the Chair, representing the PICs at the Board of Governors Meeting.

We had a bilateral meeting with the ADB President, Mr. Nakao, and again, it gave us the opportunity to update the President on the devastation caused by *Cyclone Winston*. As you know, ADB had also given a grant of USD2,000,000, to help us use for the initiatives that we had undertaken.

Madam Speaker, we also briefed him on the 'Help for Homes Initiative' and 'Adopt a School Programme' and indeed, they were very pleased in particular, with the 'Adopt a School Programme', where it gives a different level and a heightened level of transparency. Also, people are being given a choice to identify which schools, for example, they can sponsor which the Honourable Minister for Education earlier alluded to.

We also talked to them about the vulnerability of our infrastructure, as highlighted in the discussions earlier on about climate change, about how we now need to start looking at building back better in terms of the resilience that we need to build in, in particular with our infrastructure as I have highlighted with the Fiji Electricity Authority (FEA) and how we need to think long term in those respects and how there needs to be an access to financing over a period of time, to build these capital projects.

We also talked about the opportunities that exist for Fiji in creating itself as a financial hub, as I had mentioned (I think) in this Parliament about how we are currently looking with the help of the Commonwealth Bank, in terms of looking at all our Treasury Bills (T-Bills) that had been issued over a number of years and the past number of decades where T-Bills had been issued by the Government in small tranches. So, when, for example, Parliament approves Government to go and borrow money to fund the budget, we have been issuing small tranches - \$5 million, \$10 million, \$3 million or whatever it is, and we issue it out to the market. However, that does not actually give you very good deals, so with the Commonwealth, you are actually working out as to how we can aggregate those small tranches that had been issued and perhaps, give them in bigger parcels - \$50 million or \$100 million and then actually advocate for Secondary Market Trading in Fiji.

Normally, when people in Fiji buy T-Bills, they are normally bought by banks or insurance companies or other investors, they simply take the paper and put it in the drawer and just wait for the maturity date to come up. But what we see in other markets is actually trading in T-Bills in what they call 'Secondary Market Trading', which we had also briefed them about.

We had a meeting with the representatives of the Nordic countries, which were Sweden, Norway, Netherlands and Finland and again, we briefed them about some of the issues and they are quite keen to participate, in particular with the EU, for example, Netherlands. As you know, most parts of Netherlands are below sea level, they have been for centuries. They are quite good at managing floods, they have a lot of network of canals within their country and they were quite interested, for example in the Nadi River project and so we said that we will further those talks through our Ministry, and also with the Ministry responsible for flood management in Fiji and also together with the EU.

We also talked to the Swedish delegation about Sweden's commitment to the Oceans Conference that will be held in Fiji, in June of next year. That is a very large UN conference that is going to be held in Fiji, UN funded and UN facilitated through the European Union also.

Madam Speaker, we had a meeting with the Australian Minister for International Development in the Pacific, in fact it was a very good meeting and she is a very effervescent lady. I am sure the Honourable Minister for Labour, who has met up with her, would tell you that she is very willing.

One of the issues that we did discuss with the Minister was how that when countries do provide aid and development assistance, it must complement Government's development agenda, because they cannot

be shooting off in different directions. There needs to be complementary because at the end of the day, as a country, we should not be in 10 or 20 years' time still wanting aid.

We should get off the aid cycle and Fiji, fortunately, does not have a high level of aid compared to the other Pacific Island countries. In fact, some of the Pacific Island countries have something like about 90 percent of their entire budget is funded by direct aid donations. Fiji, obviously is in an endurable position because we are not in that position, nonetheless we still receive aid and we want to ensure that that aid is complementary to the country's overall development, so eventually we can get off the aid cycle.

We also discussed with her about how we can harness the private sector, and she was quite keen in that area regarding, for example, how we are allowing more outsourcing and there are opportunities for obviously private companies from Australia, in this particular respect.

We also discussed about the double taxation agreement that has been pending from the Australian side for quite some time and how we need to progress that. The new aid agreement between Fiji and Australia is currently being vetted through the respective ministries and we hope to have that agreement signed very soon.

We also had a meeting with the European Commission's Director for Asia and Pacific responsible for European Aid and it was a very positive meeting. In fact, our Honourable Prime Minister is currently in Papua New Guinea, where the EU has a meeting with the other African and Caribbean and Pacific Island countries, where a number of agreements will be signed. In fact, the EU is very pleased with the Government's financial management on management of public resources and this is why they actually have offered to give direct budgetary input for the 2016/2017 budget year.

We also discussed the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment Report that was the work together with the Ministry of National Disaster Management, together with the EU, World Bank, UN and ADB and their report actually provides a comprehensive assessment of the damage caused by *Cyclone Winston* and the needs of Fijians living in those affected areas and indeed going forward as to how we can build better.

We also had a meeting with the German Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development. We met with the Head of the Division for Regional Development Policy and discussed a number of matters. Of course, as you know, the Germans have the organisation called 'GIZ' which is present in Fiji and we hope to do a lot more work with them.

They were very, very upbeat about the 'Help for Homes' programme, in particular the 'Adopt a School' programme. They like to see a lot of synergy being developed between the private sector and the public sector, which of course these two initiatives have helped to facilitate and we gave them a general brief about the effects of *Cyclone Winston* and indeed what we are going to do further ahead.

We also met with Spain and Italy and discussed again more opportunities in the private sector. There seems to be a lot of ignorance in terms of the private sector opportunities.

We also met with OPEC, which has a fund for international development called OFID. We, in fact, did not know about the fact that OPEC has a development aid facility attached to its office. They are based in Austria, we hope to soon sign an MOU with them. They did say that they have funded a number of projects, in fact they have funded some projects also in Samoa already, where they do provide, for example, alternative fuel in replace of fossil fuel. So we are quite keen to do some work with them. In fact, one of them had studied with a former senior civil servant from Fiji and we hope to obviously take advantage of those types of relationships.

Last but not least, Madam Speaker, we would also like to inform this House that Fiji has actually put up its hand to host the ADB Annual Meeting either in 2019 or 2020 and the ADB is actually very keen

for Fiji to host it. It has never been held in the Pacific ever before. We, at the moment, do not have the capacity to do it, we are currently talking to FNPF, where FNPF is looking at putting up a conference facility in the new resort that is currently being built, which is in Momi.

With a meeting such as that, Madam Speaker, we expect to have about 4,000 participants. At the moment, Fiji does not have the ability to host a convention of 4,000 people, there is nowhere that we can host it. So, Momi would be the ideal choice to have it because you need to also have the room inventory and the room inventory exists, both in Denarau.

There is a room inventory we are told, of approximately about 3,000 in the Nadi/Denarau area. It is only about 20 minutes away from Momi. Momi, of course, on the other side of Momi, you have the Inter-Continental, you have the Fijian. So, we will be able to then host this conference and it will be a big achievement for Fiji.

We are hoping that FNPF, of course, we are talking to them, they are already talking to some conference owners and we hope to have that facility commence. It is not just the ADB Conference itself, Madam Speaker, we have over the past few years been approached by a number of other international conferences and other things like Filmfare Awards and various other international events that were, of course, could be hosted in Fiji.

So we are very excited about this. We have a team coming to Fiji next month to assess our capacity to host such a conference. They need to also assess whether we are friendly and hospitable enough and whether our airport has the right size to host such a number of people coming through. We, of course, do that because we have a large tourism industry. The main thing is about the conference facility and we urge everyone to get behind this because this will really put Fiji up in what they call in tourism speak, the 'MICE' Market which is Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibition Market.

Last but not the least, Madam Speaker, the 50th Annual Meeting of the ADB will be held in Yokohama in Japan next year and Fiji will be the Chair of the Pacific Development member countries in that 50th meeting next year that will be held in Japan. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to respond to the Ministerial Statement by the Honourable Minister. Just at the outset, Madam Speaker, after *Tropical Cyclone Winston* we had wanted to be part of Government in the rehabilitation, in the recovery of the country. We would have loved, Madam Speaker, to have been part of this when talking to global organisations about *Tropical Cyclone Winston* and about the vulnerability of our country, and indeed this part of the world.

You may recall, Madam Speaker, we wrote, we asked for a special sitting of Parliament, specifically for *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. We know, Madam Speaker, that *Tropical Cyclone Winston* is the biggest disaster to have hit Fiji and when we visited our people, we saw the damages, we saw the misery and we told ourselves, "we will move mountains, so we will rehabilitate you to bring back what you have lost."

When we came back, Madam Speaker, after that, we asked for a special sitting to look at *Tropical Cyclone Winston* in its totality – two or three days of sitting could have enabled us as parliamentarians to establish what had to be done about *Cyclone Winston* and move forward.

Madam Speaker, housing is an issue. The Honourable Minister for Disaster had said that it will cost \$70 million, but is still not sufficient because people need more than \$7,000 and he said, "we would

need about \$320 million” and we said, “we could have done it as Parliament to raise that kind of money to make sure that our people get what they need to re-establish their lives.”

Today, Madam Speaker, there is still a lot of suffering and it is regrettable that we wasted that opportunity to have sat together as one in this House and come together with the Opposition in terms of *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, and going overseas, talking to people and it would have helped greatly if they saw the Government and the Opposition at forums like that.

Madam Speaker, specific to the Ministerial Statement, I have a few things that I need to raise. One, we are talking about economic development in this part of the world, Madam Speaker. The Minister had met with the EU, what we want to know is, why have we not ratified the economic partnership with the EU?

There is a partnership, Madam Speaker, between the EU, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. Madam Speaker, this partnership agreement enables Fiji to export to the EU, duty free and without quota. The people of the Caribbean and the people of Africa, the governments of Caribbean and Africa would kill for what has been given to Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

As an example, Madam Speaker, today in Papua New Guinea, they have taken on cannery – fishing, to can their fish and the rules of origin has been liberalised. You can buy your fish from anywhere and package it in Papua New Guinea. Today, 54,000 Papua New Guineans are employed in canneries, exporting to the European Union. Madam Speaker, 54,000 people is just about the total employment we have in tourism in Fiji. Here, we have quota free, duty free into the European Union, we have not ratified the economic partnership agreements and we are lamenting the fact that we are not growing our economy to the extent that we create employment.

Madam Speaker, of course, time is short but let just talk about Momi. Madam Speaker, to create a 4,000 seater convention centre is like a city that puts all its resource to build for the Olympics: ask Beijing; ask Sydney; ask all those cities, what happened after the Olympics? They are sitting there, unutilised and they are scratching their heads on what to do with those facilities. Sure, they have found other ways but it is a huge cost to them, Madam Speaker. I would say, “You do not go that way, 4,000 delegates to conferences come once in a life time. Do not put FNPF money in building something like that, that would be a white elephant for most of the year”. I would advise very strongly against it.

Madam Speaker, in closing ....

*Bakshish, Bakshish*, one more minute!

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the National Federation Party or his designate.

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

I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. I am also happy to hear these large meetings can be big jamborees, but I am glad that the Honourable Minister was able to navigate his way and meet so many people of interest to Fiji, and I hope that we will benefit from that kind of engagement.

One of the things that the Minister’s statement, Madam Speaker, brings home is his idea of us in the Pacific working together, and I have always maintained that the more meaningful, deeper, regional integration, which not only includes the Pacific Islands, but also includes our two neighbours and we have seen the importance of those two neighbours - Australia and New Zealand, in the wake of *Cyclone Winston*. So, I am happy that we are working towards developing that meaningful regional and deeper integration

with the Pacific, and I hope that with the conclusion of the Pacer Plus and other Agreements, we would be able to have a much more meaningful regional agreement, including Australia and New Zealand.

The other point that I want to make, Madam Speaker, is that climate change is a big issue, there is no doubt about that, but sometimes when you look at how international organisations and how these bureaucratic big organisations deal with these kind of issues- climate funding, et cetera, it becomes a fashion as well. Sometimes, countries get sucked into dealing with these big issues, without actually focussing and prioritising what the country ought to do.

Here, I want to ask the Government to look at the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), not all of them would be a priority for us at all times but I think they are very, very important goals which includes the idea of climate change, to come up with a national plan. I am still waiting for the Development Plan that the Government is working on, and I hope that they would look at the 17 SDGs, come up with a very prioritised plan which will also allow Government to source climate change funding and other sources of funding elsewhere.

I like the idea of MICE, I think Fiji is an attractive destination, Madam Speaker. We can benefit in terms of the number of people who can visit us and so, I do not know, I might have a different view with the Honourable Gavoka. Maybe, we need a big convention centre but I am not sure whether the FNPF's investment in Momi Bay, that is debatable and perhaps, at some point, we would like to talk about it.

The other issue, Madam Speaker, when we deal with international institutions and with our partners, invariably, many of these partners are concerned about our policies, our governance structure and our incentive mechanisms. So, I think it is very, very important for us as a country to be mindful of our own governance structure and our own incentives and let me say, Madam Speaker, that there are some areas of governance that remain wanting, that need to be looked at, and the laws that we make have to be transparent, accountable and should be made with an understanding that these laws would be taken through the various processes, such as a proper standing committees, consultation with the people because the international community (we are not an isolated island anymore) is looking at us all the time.

They are not only looking at us as some kind of a romantic idyllic place but they are also looking at our governance structure; they are looking at what we do and how we function in this House. These are all very, very important signals and directions that countries who engage with us, who practice a true democracy, who practice principles of good governance, they look at us. So, I think that while we do all these international visits, I know the Honourable Prime Minister is quite busy with that, we need to be mindful of what we do here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

#### Strategies Adopted to Improve Students' Performance in Primary and High Schools

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Acting Prime Minister, Members of the House; I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on the strategies that we have adopted to improve students' performance in our primary and high school systems.

Madam Speaker, before that, I want to ask a big *kerekere* from you, if I could get that five minutes each from the other side, anyway they would not be making any sensible contribution, if I could add that five minutes to my 20 minutes.

(Chorus of interjections from the Opposition)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, it amazes me how my friend can make some really flippant comments like that. I think he should leave it to you, Madam Speaker, to decide whether the five minutes allocated to these Members are good.

HON. SPEAKER.- You may carry on, Honourable Minister.

HON. MEMBER.- It's a joke.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I believe I have livened them up.

Madam Speaker, 2016 is an exceptional year. The impact of *Cyclone Winston* has affected almost every individual in this country; outside the cyclone zone as well, in different ways.

When the Honourable Prime Minister convened our meeting immediately after the cyclone, he set a resilient deadline that all schools should open in a week's time. He had mentioned that while we understand the task that lay ahead, his main concern was the children who were affected. He reasoned out that while the experience with the deadly cyclone, the children were struggling, to say the least. So, leaving the children on their own to face the aftermath of the devastating turmoil would be catastrophic. At a time when our country stood a major test, the foresight of our Honourable Prime Minister stood tall, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, immediately after that, the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts partnered with key stakeholders to work with the mindset to return schools to normalcy. We worked around the clock, managed to set temporary classrooms, injected the needy resources, to make some hard decisions and assist schools to start. What we intended to achieve was for the students not to take the effects of cyclone as a reason for failure, but rather to gain strength from it and become stronger, Madam Speaker.

We are trying our level best to boost the morale of the students, improve student performance and use all possible means to achieve our target pass rate in the external exam, and raise the benchmark of academic excellence, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, one of the media strategies the Ministry for Education, Heritage and Arts adopted quickly to cover for the lost times ensured that students learning hours are not comprised was to reschedule the School Term dates. At the end of Term 1, school break was for one week only, because we had already given them one week break. We have also shortened the Term 2 break by one week, Madam Speaker, giving us (at least) one additional week of learning time.

Madam Speaker, we have distributed all the necessary educational resources possible to assist the students in the teaching and learning process. We have distributed stationery, bags, exercise books, et cetera, in majority of the schools in the affected areas.

In addition, we have resourced the schools with proper furniture which we received from the Australian Government, and thanks to them. We have already distributed furniture to 59 Schools, and breakdown is as follows:

- |    |                 |   |                 |
|----|-----------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. | Ra Division     | - | 17 schools;     |
| 2. | Bua and Macuata | - | 4 schools;      |
| 3. | Cakaudrove      | - | 10 schools;     |
| 4. | Lau             | - | 7 schools;      |
| 5. | Lomaiviti       | - | 12 schools; and |
| 6. | Nausori         | - | 9 schools.      |

Basic furniture; desks and chairs: Madam Speaker, we continue to distribute these as well, this week and next week.

We have also provided generators to schools, Madam Speaker, to a few schools that do not have electricity at all, and a few have no power until now after *Cyclone Winston*. After receiving the eight generators from donors, our senior officers identified the urgently needed schools, visited them and provided generators. Some of the schools included; Wainiyavu Primary School in Namosi, Nuku Catholic Primary School up in the Namosi area, Yasawa North Secondary School in the Yasawas, Navoli Sanatan Dharam Primary School in Ba, Davuto Sanatan Primary School in Tavua, Sudhar Primary School in Ra, Naroko Primary School in Ra and Tataiya Memorial Primary School in Ra.

Madam Speaker, we continue to develop resources and load them online to be accessible to all teachers and students. A list of few resources that are already online included thematic curriculum for Years 1 and 2, Syllabus for Years 3 to 13, free textbooks for all levels, past year external examination papers with detailed solutions, Madam Speaker, so that they can undertake self-tutoring and self-revision.

We have also provided e-learning links to additional resources; jolly phonics, free academic journals, teacher's guides, et cetera. In addition, we have distributed all secondary textbooks to schools in the flash drives, 25 flash drives per school, Madam Speaker, whereby School Heads can give it to students who have access to PC so that they can download it at home and return the flash drive back to the school.

We have also provided primary textbooks to schools in CDs as well, Madam Speaker, as a backup. Also, Madam Speaker, for schools without internet access, we are compiling all past year materials into CDs and distribution will start shortly.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, the Literacy and Numeracy Skills Exam national training has been provided in a form of a video presentation and loaded into DVDs which have been given to all schools, and also uploaded on our homepage and *You Tube* as well. The DVDs contain all training resources for LANA, as well as Jolly Phonics. These resources are also made available on the Ministry of Education homepage, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we are rolling out the Parental Engagement Framework so that parents can also take ownership of their child's growth and development, and we are encouraging schools to organise more Community and Parents Support (CAPS) meetings regularly, and this has begun. Madam Speaker, we have seen and heard some very positive responses from community members about the importance of these meetings between the School and the CAPs.

Madam Speaker, External Examination results have been analysed using three different methodologies this time around to ensure we give the schools a true picture of the school performance. Up till now, we are basically using the pass rates, for example, a school having 100 per cent pass rate may have all the students getting (I will give you an example) 51 out of 100, they can have 100 per cent passes, Madam Speaker. That will not give a true picture of the performance of schools, hence we have adopted two additional methodologies; one where we do subject ranking (performances of students based on subjects) for all the subjects, relative to the whole country, and then we find the school's subject rank and use that to rank schools, and the third methodology is to examine the percentage of students getting the top 10 per cent mark in that particular school, and then rank the school. So, it gives a better picture of school performance, and therefore, gives a yardstick for School Heads, the principals in particular in this case, to see where the weaker areas are and how they can work to improve school performance, gearing up to the exams this year.

Madam Speaker, we have maintained our stance on zero-tolerance to corporal punishment inflicted to students. Added to this, we have rolled out our Child Protection Policy, our OHS requirements and other



policies to take full care or welfare of children. We are also working very closely with the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Madam Speaker, there is no reason why a child should be punished, humiliated or demeaned. This has been done to motivate the child to know that schools are a safe and caring place for them to come to. We want to ensure that we maintain the trust and confidence that parents have on the school system. When a parent drops a child at the school doorstep in the morning before 8.00 a.m., and picks the child at 3.00 p.m., 3.30 p.m. or 4.00 p.m., that demonstrates the confidence and trust the parents has on the school system, and we need to ensure that at all times, we do not let that trust and confidence break, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we have asked Principals and Head Teachers of schools not to teach, but focus on monitoring and administrative work. We want them to walk around the corridor, enter the classrooms and observe lesson delivery and lesson preparation of teachers, and keep the teachers on their toes.

Madam Speaker, we are organising District-Based Career Education Workshops where we are giving students opportunities to have first-hand information on career paths, so that they make the right decision in choosing, particularly after Year 10. That is a very critical year, where parents as well as a child is wanting to make a choice of which particular stream they choose, and we want to ensure that at that particular point in time, the students have full information about possible career paths, as well as market opportunities, so that they make the right decisions on which stream to go.

Madam Speaker, we are partnering with some key government, non-government, non-profit and religious organisations to bring a diversity of programmes and activities in schools to aid students' learning and general information. Madam Speaker, we see schools now as a place for education, not only giving basic qualification for mainstream subjects. I think the Honourable Prime Minister's objective of developing and securing a future Fiji of citizens which are responsible depends to a large extent on our ability to educate the students on values and virtues, and being accommodative. We are organising oratory contests, essays, debates, quizzes, interactive workshops and cultural events in the schools involving the students, and we are inviting the students to make presentations. For example, while essay competitions fetch good prizes, it also heightens students' interests and initiatives to research, plan and write, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, these activities also assist students to forge critical thinking, move outside the box, think about some of those things that just take for granted, Madam Speaker, and acquire problem solving skills.

Madam Speaker, we are all aware of our Government's Free Education Scheme. We have now added another dimension to that whereby we are ensuring that grants are given out to schools right from the beginning of the term, so that they do not face any difficulties in meeting financial obligations. We want to push the schools in motion from day one, as such providing the financial requirements before time is what we are steering towards.

Added to this, Madam Speaker, the same aim has been set for the Bus Fare Scheme. Steps have been taken this year so that there is no delay. This year, not a single school complained or parents complained that they did not get bus fare vouchers in the first week. We made changes of how we give the bus fare vouchers so that no parents or those things which were found last year is repeated.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts has also adopted a Complaints Feedback and Action Timeframe to be within reach. We are now ensuring that every parent's, every child's and every stakeholder's complaint is responded to immediately, while we then go through the process of investigating the complaint.

Complaints on teachers and school heads, and other forms of grievances are addressed quickly with minimal disturbances in the school system. Apart from this, we identify complaints which directly affect students in the classroom and after addressing them, we go to the schools and counsel the affected students as well, Madam Speaker. We assist them to re-focus and not let the issue disturb their efforts.

Madam Speaker, we have evaluated the teacher to pupil ratio in schools and we are also ensuring that the schools with the less number of teachers are assisted, particularly schools where we found that they had less than eight teachers before. Gradually, with the additional 279 teachers this year, we are raising the teacher to student ratio.

Madam Speaker, we now have decentralised specialist educational counsellors as was asked yesterday with the question raised by Honourable Leawere, to the Central Education Office. This year, we organised psychological support programme through counselling sessions for children and teachers, and supported their efforts to realign themselves to school work. Of course, it was a difficult process but one that the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts handled with great care and urgency, Madam Speaker, given the aftermath and effects of the last cyclone, Madam Speaker.

Todate, 1,805 teachers and 30,094 students from various primary and secondary schools in Fiji had undergone psychological support. I hope they are listening, Madam Speaker. They are making regular visits to the affected zones, talking to students, teachers and even community in providing means and ways for positive thinking, Madam Speaker, and continued aspirations for academic achievements, Madam Speaker.

In addition, Madam Speaker, the role of these counsellors as per the request from the schools is also to counsel individual student or groups, and assist them to address their problems. We streamline the process whereby schools report chronic or concerning cases to the education office, Madam Speaker, would then collate the data and refer the student for counselling.

Madam Speaker, we have also adopted the process of training our teachers to have basic counselling skills. We want all our teachers to have basic counselling skills, and I think there is a question which I will be explaining more on, on OHS and First Aid training of our teachers, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, when we read into external exams last year, we did face a few hiccups along the way, and an area that we intended to give greater importance this year is the quality of exam papers. We carried out an extensive survey on the external exam papers and gained critical comments on that from all schools. The Examination Unit then evaluated the comments and took on board those that positively contributed to the quality of the scripts. This year, as such, we can look forward to more error free exam papers.

Madam Speaker, our teachers are going out of their way and making huge sacrifices to assist the students' catch-up with the time lost due to disaster and prepare our students even better to achieve quality output. Some of the common strategies that the schools and teachers are using to assist the students to improve their performance are as follows.

One, on extra classes; schools are organising Saturday classes. Now, in Term 2, Saturday classes are now ongoing, morning and afternoon classes, as well as evening classes are also being undertaken, Madam Speaker. Teachers are staying behind for, at least, an hour after school and conduct remedial classes. These classes on the evening and Saturday are remedial only, so that some students might opt not to come because they are bright students, they do not need any additional remedial work, so it is an optional thing, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, as per the data we collected from the secondary school, it is noted that almost 50 percent of our schools are already having Saturday classes. The others are now getting into the motion.

Additionally, about 25 percent are having evening and night classes, Madam Speaker, mostly boarding schools. About 82 percent of the schools are having afternoon classes, Madam Speaker, while others will start shortly. These extra classes are for remedial only.

Madam Speaker, the second is regular professional development sessions are being organised for staff members on the teaching strategies used by teachers in a way to improve school results. Schools have this as a calendared activity and records of the Professional Development sessions are also forwarded to the Ministry of Education as they are required to have 20 hours PD per year to maintain the teacher registration.

Madam Speaker, School Heads are working towards strengthening values education in schools, as I had alluded to earlier on. This is important to build responsible citizens.

Madam Speaker, teachers are increasingly using the digital technology and e-learning methods to ensure, not only time saving but also better delivery. We are gradually moving towards more and more e-learning facilities but our speed in introducing e-learning is affected to some extent due to the availability of IT reception and electricity.

Madam Speaker, to strengthen literacy amongst our primary school students, Years 1 and 2 students have started with Jolly Phonics from Term 1 of 2016. Jolly Phonics is to improve the national literacy standards, gauge students' reading progress, identify the need of the struggling students so the teachers can provide appropriate remedial and thus, further intervention programmes are implemented.

Madam Speaker, we are also getting schools to allocate time for the DEAR Programme, Drop Everything and Read, and this will further improve the children's literacy.

Madam Speaker, we have now basically accepted the fact that, to improve the quality and output coming out of the high school system, you have to start from primary school, Madam Speaker. We need to ensure that good quality students are churned out from primary schools would fit into the high school system.

Madam Speaker, schools organise fortnightly academic meetings with their heads of departments where their heads are reminded of departmental results and school heads are asked to identify those teachers who are not performing well or the students not performing well, and to take explicit strategies and send us reports on those strategies and follow ups, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, remedial class for slow learners and those who are not showing improvement and smart students' tutorials are also organised. The special tutorials are organised where students and teachers will be identifying weaker students.

Madam Speaker, few schools have gone through the extent to implement the concept of parenting in school or child adoption. We have visited two schools where this unique concept is in place now, especially for students preparing for external examinations. This is whereby each teacher in the school is given charge of about five to seven students, depending on the student: teacher ratio, thus becoming their parents and we are modelling this concept, and we hope that this concept will assist these weaker students to come up.

Madam Speaker, we also adopt an important strategy that most schools adopt which is Community Outreach Programme as part of their parental engagement to support the children, in this critical Term 2 and Term 3.

Madam Speaker, schools and teachers are setting targets and they are working towards that. We are getting updates on these targets and how they are working towards achieving this target.

Madam Speaker, peer tutoring and peer educating as an activity, we are encouraging this and are also encouraging journal writing which used to happen before and it kind of disappeared somewhere along the line. We are encouraging teachers to adopt journal writing. Every morning, a child will come up with a small piece of writing last night, about half a page or one page and this will definitely improve their literacy skills.

Madam Speaker, having done these, tools are not down yet, we are ready to provide additional support to our schools and teachers should they contact us for additional re-enforcements. Our children's education is and will remain our ultimate goal, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, I would like to respond to the statement made by the Honourable Minister for Education. From the outset, I would like to take us back to the London Sevens when Fiji lost against England and then Ben Ryan adopted some strategies for the team to win against Australia. Then they went on to win the Series but the fact is, he saw how his team was performing, and then he adopted some plan, but in here, he is flogging a dead horse.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- All the activities are still there, there is nothing new.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Nothing new, nothing new!

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- The Children of Avea District School...

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- You are calling our teachers a dead horse.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- No, you.

(Laughter)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- The children of Avea District School, Madam Speaker, do not have any classrooms. They are being taught in private homes...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Awh!

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- ...and look at the strategies that the Honourable Minister is trying to adopt and tell this nation, which is not true. There is no visitation from these officials to Avea District School.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Only words!

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, I would like to highlight three points here. The first is the content of the curriculum. What the Ministry should have been doing is to tone down the content of the curriculum to suit these ravaged schools, especially those that have been devastated by *TC Winston* because in that regard, they will be able to pass their exams as alluded to by the Honourable Minister for Education.

School text books and resource materials, Madam Speaker, need to be supplied to the schools.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Not yet?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Whiteboards, IT, I am just trying to tell him what he should be doing.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Awh!

Lions programmes, recreation centres, these are essential for the children to develop, especially in their schools.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- I can do a better job than you.

(Laughter)

In terms of teachers who had been affected, Madam Speaker, they need psychosocial support. If need be, what the Ministry should be doing is to get the retired teachers and send them to these schools and get these teachers who are affected to come to the mainland. In that way, they will be able to assist the schools that have been ravaged by *TC Winston*. Also, offer incentives, like allowances and may be plane tickets or boat fare to and fro. These are things that the Honourable Minister should be telling this House what they should be doing.

Madam Speaker, in terms of examination, they need to look at teachers who are experts in respective areas, especially in the units that they teach, and then formulate examination questions to suit these schools so that they can achieve the results that is needed, especially when we are talking about 100 percent results, but there is a lot of work to be done in that regard, Madam Speaker.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Of course, the Ministry should be doing that.

(Laughter)

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- The problem, Madam Speaker, is that we are teaching the same curriculum ...

HON. MEMBER.- Same old!

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- ... not only to those schools that are affected but to those schools at that level. There should be consideration for schools that are affected, especially by *TC Winston* and there should be consideration in that regard.

HON. MEMBER.- Same old, same old!

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Teachers are still being traumatised, Madam Speaker, from the event, and some are even wanting to be transferred. However, the unfortunate thing about this, when someone cries from Vunigigia to come back to the mainland Viti Levu, there goes the help from the Ministry of Education. In Rotuma High School in terms of the HOD and what happened was that, Madam Speaker, whenever ....

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, why can the Ministry of Education not exempt students from external examinations, except for Year 12 and Year 13? We need to consider this, in order for our students to excel in the examinations. We need to look at that seriously, Madam Speaker, and understand that there are

Research Officers in the Ministry of Education. These Research Officers should be conducting researches so that they can take the Ministry the way forward, and importantly on education in emergencies, Madam Speaker.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the leader of the National Federation Party or his designate.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. I think the first part of this statement was really about what the Government is doing and what his Ministry is doing in terms of helping students who were affected by *TC Winston*. Obviously, the second part of the Honourable Minister's Statement was more on how to improve performance.

Madam Speaker, I have said this before in this House and it amazes me so much about the arrogance of this Government and the Honourable Minister for Education not to institute an Education Commission because what he said today (and this is what he has been saying all along), I think he is looking at the micro picture, he is doing micro things. I know there are some good things he is doing. Things here, things there, curriculum, teachers and there are a lot of things that he is trying to do, but many of those of things, Madam Speaker, like debate, oratory contests, teachers meetings, I mean, we all know these was happening from the 1970s when we were in primary schools, but that is not the point.

The point is, Madam Speaker, that if you want to improve the overall quality, there is a thing called quality versus quantity. Any country which just focuses on quantity, not in terms of only getting the number of students into schools but quality in terms of what they do - infrastructure, support, teachers, student: teacher ratio and all the rest of it, but the most important thing is, and this is what I keep on imploring on the Honourable Minister for Education, for God's sake, get an education commission. Let us look at the real issues about quality, the real problems in the education system and set up a macro policy. That is what we are trying to say. It is not good coming here and saying 'fee free education' when we had fee-free education. I studied, Madam Speaker, on Fee-Free Education right up until Form 6 because it was based on the level of income your parents had. So, it is not entirely new, I mean, we appreciate the tuition free.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- This is the kind of arrogance that they have in not addressing the fundamental issues of quality. The broader definition of quality requires one to look at the learners, content, the processes, the outcomes, and we have not had a proper assessment. The last Education Commission was in 2000, then we had a series of reforms by the Military Government which removed exams which changed the curriculum content, and this Minister comes in and re-introduces without any research and without understanding what the impact is going to be.

Today, Madam Speaker, what the Honourable Minister is doing, the micro picture that he is bringing out here, does not address the fundamental issues within the education system. When I was listening to him, Madam Speaker, it always gives me an impression. I know thousands of teachers out there, they are under pressure.

HON. MEMBER.- No!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- They do not know what is happening.

HON. MEMBER.- No!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- They get emails from their Minister for Education. He decides on who gets appointed as a Head of Department or as Principal.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- These are the kind of things that this Minister for Education is doing.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The Acting Honourable Prime Minister should tell him to set up an Education Commission tomorrow. This is under this Minister for Education, we are dumbing down the whole education system in this country.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Under this FijiFirst Government, we will have the dumbest system that we are creating, Madam Speaker. Let us.....

(Hon. Govt. Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, I am not calling the students, I am calling your Government dumb! Your Government is dumb! Your Government is damning down the education system!

(Laughter)

The Government is dumbing down the education system, not the students and not the teachers. The teachers and students are working very hard, it is the Government's policy and mismanagement which is dumbing down the system.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will now adjourn and break for lunch. Please note that lunch is provided for Honourable Members in the Big Committee Room. The Business Committee Members are also hereby reminded of our meeting in the Small Committee Room.

We will resume proceeding at 2.30 p.m. Thank you, Honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.28 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.35 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will resume from where we left off in the Order Paper.

### **DEFERMENT - TABLING OF COMMITTEE REPORTS**

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I beg to move:

That Parliament allows the Standing Committees to table their Reports on the following Bills at a later Sitting:

- 1) Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights:
  - a) Adoption Bill 2016 (Bill No. 21 of 2016);
  - b) Code of Conduct Bill 2016 (Bill No. 22 of 2016); and
  - c) Public Order (Amendment) Bill 2016 (Bill No. 23 of 2016).
- 2) Standing Committee on Social Affairs:
  - a) Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016 (Bill No. 12 of 2016);
  - b) Heritage Bill 2016 (Bill No. 10 of 2016);
  - c) Rotuma Bill 2015 (Bill No. 6 of 2015); and
  - d) Rotuma Lands Bill 2015 (Bill No. 7 of 2015).
- 3) Standing Committee on Economic Affairs:
  - a) Reform of Sugarcane Industry Bill 2016 (Bill No. 19 of 2016); and
  - b) Sugarcane Growers Fund (Amendment) Bill 2016 (Bill No. 20 of 2016).
- 4) Standing Committee on Natural Resources:
  - a) Forest Bill 2016 (Bill No. 13 of 2016);
  - b) Aquaculture Bill 2016 (Bill No. 9 of 2016);
  - c) Land and Water Resources Management Bill 2016 (Bill No. 7 of 2016);
  - d) Fiji Meteorological and Hydrological Services Bill 2016 (Bill No. 4 of 2016); and
  - e) Kava Bill 2016 (Bill No. 24 of 2016).

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Government Whip to have the floor.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I would like to say that the House would recall that in previous Parliament sessions on previous occasions, the respective Committees were given the task to scrutinise and report back on the Bills that I have read to this Parliament. The Committees, straight after the Bills were referred to them, have been involved in public consultations and have called and heard witnesses, and all the Committees have been doing their task as assigned.

However, Madam Speaker, with the number of Bills that have been referred to each Committee, as we had agreed in the Business Committee that the number of Bills that was given, the time was not adequate in the past month or so. Some of the Bills are near completion as well as some reports, however others need more consultations. I am going to meet with the respective Chairs of the respective Committees, and have a timetable set out again and present it to the Business Committee to rearrange our



priority. Bills do take precedence and there have been other reports and petitions that are pending before some Committees.

With the workload that the Committees have, I have discussed this with the respective Chairs, we were not able to perform our tasks and complete the reports. Therefore, my motion this afternoon as I have presented, to seek the indulgence of this honourable House to allow us time so that those reports or Bills be presented at a future sitting, not necessarily in the next sitting, but only to allow the Committees to scrutinise the Bills properly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is now open for debate.

(Pause)

There being no input to this debate, and I take it that the Government Whip will not have anything to say in reply, Parliament will vote on the motion.

The question is that Parliament allows the Standing Committees to table their reports of the following Bills at a later Sitting:

1. Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights:
  - a) Adoption Bill 2016 (Bill No. 21 of 2016);
  - b) Code of Conduct Bill 2016 (Bill No. 22 of 2016); and
  - c) Public Order (Amendment) Bill 2016 (Bill No. 23 of 2016).
2. Standing Committee on Social Affairs:
  - a) Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016 (Bill No. 12 of 2016);
  - b) Heritage Bill 2016 (Bill No. 10 of 2016);
  - c) Rotuma Bill 2015 (Bill No. 6 of 2015); and
  - d) Rotuma Lands Bill 2015 (Bill No. 7 of 2015).
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  - a) Reform of Sugarcane Industry Bill 2016 (Bill No. 19 of 2016); and
  - b) Sugarcane Growers Fund (Amendment) Bill 2016 (Bill No. 20 of 2016).
4. Standing Committee on Natural Resources:
  - a) Forest Bill 2016 (Bill No. 13 of 2016);
  - b) Aquaculture Bill 2016 (Bill No. 9 of 2016);
  - c) Land and Water Resources Management Bill 2016 (Bill No. 7 of 2016);
  - d) Fiji Meteorological and Hydrological Services Bill 2016 (Bill No. 4 of 2016); and
  - e) Kava Bill 2016 (Bill No. 24 of 2016).

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

I now call upon the Honourable Prem Singh to move his motion.

**FSC MILLS – OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES**

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker. I rise to move:

That in light of five accidents resulting in three deaths in the last two years in the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) Mills, that Parliament agrees to an independent audit of the FSC Mills before the start of the 2016 current crushing season, focusing on mill operations and Occupational Health and Safety procedures.

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

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, at the outset let me say that OHS Regulations have been neglected by the FSC in its sugar mills. Five workplace incidents, including three deaths in the last two years in FSC Mills, prove the lack and violation of the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Regulations and procedures at the mills.

Madam Speaker, the FSC Executive Chairman commented in the media that the Health and Safety Regulations are not being adhered to by mill workers. Madam Speaker, this is preposterous. He has clearly shifted the blame and ignored the failure of FSC to strictly adhere to and implement provisions of the Health and Safety Work Act of 1996.

The FSC has been side-stepping the fundamental issue of whether there are properly constituted Occupational Health and Safety Committees at each of the four Mills and if so, whether the Committees are functional, independent, or riddled with interference from the Management. Madam Speaker, the FSC should answer if the Committees of the Lautoka and Rarawa Mills were involved in the investigation process of these incidents which happened there and were well reported in the media.

Since 2013, there have been three accidents at the Lautoka Mill, resulting in two deaths. Two accidents have occurred at Rarawai Mill, resulting in the death of a single parent and sole breadwinner. Madam Speaker, let me quote from the *Fiji Times* report of 28th July, 2015.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P. SINGH.- I quote:

“A father who raised his five children on his own for the past three years, tragically died on Sunday, allegedly from injuries sustained during an accident at the Rarawa Mill in Ba.”

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- So sad.

HON. P. SINGH.-

“Grieving relatives rushed to the family home in Veisaru, Ba when they heard the news to console the children aged 18, 16, 12, 10 and 7.

Keni Senimoli, 44, passed away at the Ba Mission Hospital at about 9.00 a.m. on Sunday allegedly from injuries sustained after he got entangled in a conveyor transporting bagasse. The deceased’s elder brother, Taitusi Jirau, said his main concern was how the family was going to be taken care of.”

Madam Speaker, this is a tragic story. Negligence led to Mr. Senimoli’s death, this is only one example.

Madam Speaker, three days later on 31st July, 2015 we heard of another accident at the Rarawai Mill, and I quote from the *Fiji Times* report of that day:

“Police have confirmed another accident at the Rarawai Sugar Mill in Ba where a worker fell into a vessel containing extremely hot liquid. It is understood he suffered extensive burns and was rushed to the Lautoka Hospital yesterday afternoon. The incident comes days after another worker passed away allegedly from injuries sustained at the mill when he was entangled in a conveyor transporting bagasse.”

Madam Speaker, such incidents and accidents are unacceptable.

FSC should have conducted independent investigations, and it is totally unacceptable that workers at the Rarawai Mill were suspended following an accident where workers suffered burns without any investigation in the first place in accordance with OHS Regulations in the Act.

We also believed that the family of the worker who died at the Lautoka Mill in 2013, is still awaiting the outcome of the investigations. Two years after his death, the family has not received any compensation, Madam Speaker. I believe that given the spate of accidents at the Mills, the OHS procedures as well as Committees, if they exist, are dysfunctional.

I also believe that the Management has been ignoring issues concerning health and safety being raised by the workers through their representatives. The exposure of inefficiencies at the Penang Mill by the NFP in July last year confirms our belief.

The problems at the Penang Mill existed at the start of the season and were not resolved, with crushing continuing for four weeks until our investigations revealed the seriousness of the ill plaguing the Mill, forcing an admission from the FSC Chairman.

Now, Madam Speaker, the incidents led to Tate and Lyle, the buyers of our sugar, also raised concerns about the state of the Mills as far as OHS was concerned. This should worry all of us because I do not know where we will sell our sugar without Tate and Lyle.

Madam Speaker, that is why I call upon this Parliament to approve this motion. There should be an independent investigation into the state of preparedness of Mills as far as health and safety issues are concerned. It should be jointly conducted by the Government, the FSC and the Sugar Cane Growers Council as stakeholders of the industry. Such inquiry should establish whether OHS Workplace Committees in the Mills are properly constituted, with representatives of the workers leading them as required by our OHS regulators, as well as whether suitable monetary compensations (if any) has been paid to the families of the victims.

Madam Speaker, FSC, as a Government Owned Commercial Entity, heavily funded by the taxpayers through loans and Government guarantees, it is therefore, obligated to tell the truth instead of playing the blame game. This must stop for the sake of the safety of our workers and their families.

I commend the motion, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is now open for debate. Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I think it is very sad that we have this state of affairs in the sugar industry, given the importance of the industry to our economy. It is one of the bedrock foundations for our economy, it contributes 12 percent to 15 percent of the GDP...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, it doesn't.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- ... and 50 percent to 60 percent of the agricultural GDP.

Madam Speaker, the industry directly employs about 40,000 people and 250,000 indirectly, so that is how important the industry is. And it is very sad indeed that we hear about the state of affairs in these Mills and these accidents and the blame, I submit, should fall squarely on the Government for its bad management. It has been looking after this industry for 10 years now and nothing has happened.

The production of the industry has been dropping all the time, whereas we hear that money that had been allocated had been used elsewhere. It was reported that one of its Directors was paid \$800,000, so where is the money being spent rightfully. That is the reason why I commend, and I support the motion that is before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker I wish to make a contribution as OHS falls under my Ministry. I think we do not need to exaggerate and be emotional about an issue for public show.

Madam Speaker, let me at the outset state that accidents and death is a fact of our daily life. They are forever present ...

HON. MEMBERS.- Awh!

HON. CDR S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- ... just as danger and death is part of living. Accidents and consequent death must be viewed in its proper context. In this, I simply mean that the probability of accidental death depends on the activities that one participates in. Let me give an example.

On transportation modes, I consider flying by plane as high, I consider driving on the road as medium, and I consider travelling on ship as the lowest of the three. I basically mean, Madam Speaker, that if you are flying on a plane, you must expect to fall from the air if the engine stops. If you are driving on the road, the engine stops and you would expect another vehicle from the back to hit you. If you are travelling on the ship and the engine stops, you will be floating around for some time until the ship, either leaks and sinks or hit a reef and runs aground.

Madam Speaker, allow me to talk on FSC and elaborate on the reasons why we, as Government, do not think that an independent audit is necessary.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry had collaborated with the FSC through a joint partnership project to design, develop and commission a comprehensive OHS Management System with the primary aim of providing a safe healthy workplace in all the sugar mills in Fiji. This was initiated as part of the capacity building of key industries, following the enactment of the Health and Safety at Work Act of 1996.

Madam Speaker, as a result, an OHS Inspectorate had been assigned to carry out a comprehensive review of FSC OHS Management System to identify areas of improvement. This exercise was carried out in the late 2015, and the Ministry is currently assisting the FSC in improving their OHS Management System.

Madam Speaker, one of the key focus areas is to make all workers aware of the health and safety requirements during their work through appropriate training, to enable them to co-operate with the employer in ensuring that the workplace remains accident-free. Madam Speaker, while on this subject, I want to make a comparison between death accidents in our sugar mills with the other common accidents in our nation that led to fatalities.

While we debate about the accidents in our sugar mills which is low, there is an alarming trend in the other types of accident fatalities that need highlighting, and I will discuss it as follows:

From 2013 to 2016, total deaths are as follows:

- Sugar mills – 2;
- Work related in motor vehicles – 8;
- Road accidents – 155;
- Drowning – 135;
- Fight and brawl, and influence of alcohol – 11;
- Murder – 55; and
- Sea accidents – 5.

Madam Speaker, the above statistics speaks volume of the real place of importance that needs targeting where we make comparison between the very low levels of fatalities, especially at our sugar mills which only had two deaths for the last three years, compared to 155 fatalities of road accidents and 185 fatalities by driving over the same three year period.

Madam Speaker, the health and safety at work is based on the philosophy that those who create the risk and those who work with the risk have the prime responsibility to address those risks. In this context, it is the duty of both the employer and the employee, to work together to ensure that their workplace is safe without the risk to health.

The audit of FSC's OHS Management System conducted by the Ministry has set the platform on the areas that FSC can work together with its workers to further reduce injury and fatality rate at its sugar mills. That is why I am standing here today and believe that there is no need for an internal audit to be carried out at FSC.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, it should be clear to all of us that our sugar mills need a lot of attention. We are conducting a review of the sugar industry, I am part of it and the major part of the difficulties that the farmers face has to do with the mills. I believe that these fatalities are related to the quality of the equipment on whether they are functioning properly, whether they are old or they are outdated and I believe that is the contribution to these accidents.

Madam Speaker, later when we submit our reports, sugar is one that is driven by a lot of emotions. The farmers or the growers out there are looking to us as leaders to try and fix FSC, to enable them to grow their cane, harvest it, deliver it, milled and then they get paid. I believe part of these problems here, Madam Speaker, is the pressure on the people to try and perform when the equipment is not functioning properly. When you are under pressure, when there are trucks lining up outside, when all sorts of people want their cane to be processed, it leads to this kind of situation, Madam Speaker, where the workers who are operating old equipment can do things in ways that can harm them. I think we are all aware of this, equipment that do not work properly should not be given to the workers to operate. That, Madam Speaker, is the crux of the matter and I think we need to have an audit, we need to have a look at what exactly is happening in the mills, what is working and what is not and prevail on FSC to rectify these matters, especially as we now head into the new crushing season.

Madam Speaker, Government on its high horse is saying, "we are doing this, we are doing that, we know better than you", but let me remind you of one thing, in 2006, a stream of dollars amounting to \$600

million was going to come into FSC to revive the industry, by virtue of the European Union; \$600 million. When you look at the farmers today, and I face them in this Hearing, I look at them and the problems that they are facing, and there is \$600 million. If it had been applied, year on year for the last five or six years, we would not have the problems we have today. Where did the \$600 million go? It went because of the overthrow of the Government in 2006 which the other side continues to glorify as something that they needed to do, to correct the way this country was going. You look at the faces of the farmers and ask yourself, what have you done to these people?

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, if you tell the farmers; “Sorry you have this problem. There was \$600 million coming your way but we decided that it is not good for you, wait for us to fix it”, they would tell you something else. I tell you, Madam Speaker, the intensity of the emotion in the growers is something that I have not seen in this country for quite some time. I was shocked and I could relate to it after a while because believe it or not, I was also a cane farmer, I could relate to what they are facing. Had we had the \$600 million, Madam Speaker, we would not have this problem today, so it behoves us to listen to them, listen to what you are saying here, and do what they need to help their industry. There is a collective guilt on the other side, Madam Speaker, that they need to come to terms with and fix the industry. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to contribute to the motion before the House, actually I was trying to resist rising to speak on this motion but I could not resist it, Madam Speaker.

I have seen and heard what has been said over here, it is a clear indication of self-righteousness. Madam Speaker, it reminds me of a situation when people were building the Tower of Babel. The situation is exactly the same when the value of human life is no longer regarded as anything. When a builder falls from the top to the ground, no one cares. They would care if a tool would fall to the ground and they would go down and pick it, but they would not care about a person who falls from the top to the ground, even death, Madam Speaker.

Now, a statement has been made in this House by the Honourable Minister Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations in trying to justify that when a person dies, there is no need to find the reason and try to remedy the defects. Justify the death of human beings, of people who made this country, and this industry is an industry that has helped in the past and even now, the economy of this nation.

When this was happening during the building of the Tower of Babel, Madam Speaker, it was one of the primary factors that led to the intervention of God. It is very sad, Madam Speaker, when I sit in this House and hear the kind of answers and justifications given.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- I was stating facts.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- It has taken this nation to that stage and all what we are waiting for now is the intervention, Madam Speaker. It comes from my heart, this conviction cannot go to naught. The Government must examine itself and take this motion seriously because the time to play around with lives of human beings or citizens of this country should not be here now, and should not be taken lightly.

Madam Speaker, this is the reason why I rise now, when the call or a humble request is made to include other stakeholders to look into the problem, but they even state, “No we are doing it”. They do not want anyone else’s contribution. This is the saddest state, Madam Speaker, the element of self-

righteousness that is demonstrated here in this House. I plead with the Government, Madam Speaker, to think seriously about this because they cannot revisit this path again in future. Once it is gone today, it is gone. This is why I rise, Madam Speaker, in support of the motion before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- I give the floor to the Honourable O'Connor.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Madam Speaker, allow me to contribute to the motion that is before the House.

I would like to remind this House that accidents just do not happen, they are caused. Being a son of a CSR engineer and an engineer myself, those accidents that have been mentioned by Honourable Prem Singh were accidents of negligence. The reason I say that is, I know the engineers in those Mills and at the time of those accidents, and had discussions with them. It was just sheer negligence that was the cause of those accidents.

I stand, Madam Speaker, to show my non-support of the motion before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Speaker, I rise to support the motion that is before the House. It is a very simple motion. It seeks, Madam Speaker, for an audit to be done to FSC, given that there have been deaths and injuries.

Madam Speaker, we are not talking about, if there was no accident or no death at FSC but there have been, and the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations has told us the mechanism that is in place and how his Ministry is working with FSC in regards to the OHS Management System that is in place.

However, Madam Speaker, what needs to be done is to audit that particular system and find out the weaknesses in the policies that are there, in regards to safety equipment, helmets and safety boots because most of the Mills are very hot as they operate very big and heavy machines, there are also chemicals and laboratories, and there are even heavy activities that are happening around the crushing site. So, when there is an accident, it is always wise for an audit to be done.

The Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations in trying to convince the House, Madam Speaker, tried to argue his case by comparing the injuries, fatalities at FSC with other injuries that are outside of FSC and that does not satisfy why this motion should not be supported. He failed to tell us how the policy is being implemented and how the policy has prevented injuries and death. He has not given those answers to us, but has compared FSC with other fatalities that had happened outside of the Mills. That is the substantive matter of the motion that we have.

An issue of negligence was brought up by the Honourable O'Connor but the Honourable Minister did not justify to the House whether the cause of death was through negligence or was it really a safety measure of non-compliance by the employers, Madam Speaker.

These are reasons, Madam Speaker, where there needs to be an audit carried out in FSC, and also to relook at reviewing the OHS Management System, as well as look at the weaknesses and how to improve that, it will help FSC, given that the motion will enable the audit to be done before the crushing season starts. The crushing season will happen, the Mills will operate but before that is done, because there is evidence that death has happened in the past three years, there has to be an audit carried out.

As I have said, Madam Speaker, it is quite simple and logical that the safety of our workers in the Mills are to be paramount. Not only that we are also trying to increase the production of cane that are

coming to the Mills and we are concentrating on the economic value, but we also look at the safety of our people who have given their lives to be employed at the Mills and offering their services to the Mills in the years that they have worked in, Madam Speaker.

Those are some of the issues I would like to raise, Madam Speaker, to support the motion that is before the House. Again, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations has not properly justified what is really in place in the Mills. He has failed to do that and that is why, Madam Speaker, without establishing a real answer to establish his argument, why this motion should not be supported, I support the motion which is before the House.

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

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I also rise to contribute in regards to this motion by the Honourable Prem Singh.

First, Madam Speaker, I would like to quote from the *Oxford Dictionary* on the meaning of 'accident' and it says, "Accident is an unfortunate incident that happen unintentionally, typically resulting in damage or injury or even that happens by chance." We can say anything today in this august House, but the meaning of accident comes from the dictionary.

(Laughter)

We can also mention something from the *Bible*, but this does not come from the *Bible*, it comes from the dictionary. That is why I do not support the motion before the House.

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

HON. DR. B. LAL.- Madam Speaker, I rise to share the experiences of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs that toured the Labasa Sugar Mill, and especially when we looked at a number of OHS issues whilst on that tour.

Two Members of the Opposition; the Honourable Prem Singh and the Honourable Mikaele Leawere were with us when we toured the Labasa Sugar Mill two weeks ago. It was a two-hour tour, headed by the Mill Manager. As we went through section by section, we saw on the Notice Board all the OHS Regulations, names of all the committees that are there, including the Minutes of the Meetings that were held. As a former education official, I know these are the requirements and are kept on the Notice Board.

We went through various sections of the Mill which took more than two hours and we saw the safety precautions that have been placed there by putting various types of safety requirements in the Mill. When we questioned the General Manager of the Sugar Mill, he said that in the last two years, they have not had any accidents in the Labasa Sugar Mill. That is an example that other Mills have to follow.

The OHS requirements are there, the rules are there, and in case there is an accident, the Mill will carry out its own investigation. The Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations is there to carry out the investigation. There is no need for any other independent people to go and do an audit on that.

Madam Speaker, as I have said, five members of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs toured the Labasa Mill. We saw that everything are in order and as such, I do not support this motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other input, I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General.



HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, thank you very much. Any death is tragic, I completely agree with the Honourable Karavaki that even if it is a single death, it is tragic.

Recently, we have seen 44 people who have lost their lives to *Cyclone Winston* and even the two gentlemen who lost their lives at the FSC Mill. The two people, their families, obviously it is a great tragedy for them.

What the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations was trying to highlight is that, deaths have also occurred in other sectors. The Opposition is not calling for an inquiry in those other sectors.

Madam Speaker, what he sought to highlight, which perhaps is lost on the other side, is the proportion of the deaths in comparison to the higher risk area, and the number of people working in that is comparatively low.

Madam Speaker, what has actually happened is that, there were two deaths that have occurred in the last three years, not three, as the motion says. It says in the last two years. It is actually two deaths. Nonetheless, those two deaths are tragic, Madam Speaker, and we are not taking anything away from that and we feel for the families and the loved ones who lost their loved ones lives.

Madam Speaker, what FSC has done, they have put in place a very coherent plan for measures and procedures to tighten up the systems. Since 2015, a Senior Factory Engineer has been appointed as Manager, OHS, to head and facilitate the stepping up of training of factory staff and workers to ensuring that a newly enhanced OHS rules and procedures are effectively implemented to prevent accidents.

Madam Speaker, in relation to the independent investigation itself, this is now being carried out by Mr. Simon Gibbons, who is hired by Tate and Lyle Sugars and also the American Sugar Refinery, to whom we sell our sugar to, as part of the sustainability and compliance with export to the EU and the rest of the world. The EU will not buy sugar from us if our mills are not up to various OHS standards.

Madam Speaker, the sustainability compliance looks at all OHS issues, including staff treatment and the quality of sugar being manufactured for the various export markets.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Gibbon's visit was delayed due to *Cyclone Winston*. However, he carried out the audit from the 8th to the 13th of May, this year, this month, and he is expected to conduct the final audit review around August or September of this year. These audits are part of the sustainability requirements under the world standard ProTerra Compliance. This, Madam Speaker, has already taken place.

Madam Speaker, I would like to also, however, add that it is very interesting and I would also like to clarify some issues raised from the other side. The contribution of the sugar processing, through our GDP, is not as Honourable Nawaikula said "12 to 15 percent", this is, in fact, five per cent.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Nawaikula was also with iTLTB when a majority of the leases in the sugarcane industry were not renewed.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.-In fact, Honourable Prasad will confirm that sugarcane production in Vanua Levu was cut to 50 percent, primarily because of non-renewal of leases.

Madam Speaker, the reality is, through the CBUL Programme, we have been trying to renew the leases, and in fact, the rate of renewal has been on the rise and Government is providing to the landowners about \$7 million to \$8 million.

Madam Speaker, the reality is also that, we had a number of tragic deaths in the Emperor Gold Mine days. The manner in which the local staff lived in the squalid conditions, I never recall having an inquiry, the then Parliament saw it fit, because the then Government supported such squalor conditions.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Until today, Madam Speaker, if you go around to Vatukoula, their descendants live in the squalor conditions, and we have now been now talking, obviously to the new companies that have come in. At the height of it, our local people were being treated almost close to like animals, but nothing was done about it. The deaths in those mines were very high, but nothing was done about it, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it is acceptable that in some jurisdictions, we have seen that Parliament does intervene in certain industries where there is, all of a sudden, a high rate of deaths in a particular incident. There may be a special inquiry, which is acceptable. If, for example, tomorrow 50 sugar mill workers were to die all of a sudden, we would have an inquiry, most definitely we would support that. This, Madam Speaker, the motion, it would appear is being used to politicise the issue.

(Hon. Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the issue is this. Honourable Singh could have asked, what OHS audit issues are being carried out by the Honourable Minister for Labour? He could have asked that, if he was genuinely concerned about it. He could have asked, is Tate & Lyle buying our sugar, because of these deaths? However, he did not ask that question, he has brought it by way of a motion, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the other issue is this; the Ministry of Labour staff are quite capable of carrying out OHS audits. Tate and Lyle is carrying out the audits, Madam Speaker. Parliamentarians do not have the expertise, there are qualified people to carry out those measures.

Madam Speaker, again, let me say that unfortunately, many of the comments that have come from the other side have been, in fact, an obfuscation of the issues. Madam Speaker, for example, as highlighted earlier this morning, the EPA, the EPA facts were completely wrong. We have already provisionally signed the EPA. We are already getting the benefits of EPA, without the ratification. We need to understand what will the ratification have and the implications of our ability to raise tariffs. These are the wider issues.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, this \$600 million is again not factually correct. Madam Speaker, the reality of the matter is that, as with the African countries, as with the Caribbean, as with the Pacific Island countries, the European Union is taking off subsidies. They are taking off the quota system. That is our biggest challenge, Madam Speaker, to find alternative markets, not to have a Parliamentary inquiry into an OHS issue, that can be handled by the Minister responsible quite capably.

(Hon. Members interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the reality is, that we need to be looking at these matters in an apolitical manner. We need to be looking at, if they have raised the issue about wider issues pertaining to the sugar industry. Let us talk about the renewal of leases, let us talk about longer terms for leases, not 30-year leases, so people can invest long term.

Madam Speaker, the reality is this. It is unfortunate that the deaths have occurred and that we all empathise with. It is also unfortunate that something has occurred in other sectors in Fiji. It does not require a parliamentary special audit. That is already been done, as I have highlighted, the Tate and Lyle experts are looking at that. As I have highlighted, the OHS, the Honourable Minister and his team are looking at it, but if you are concerned about this, let us raise it by way of a question. Let us not try and politicise the issue.

Numerous times they have said, “Oh, we have bigger issue facing us” yes, let us focus on the positives and the challenges that we have got coming ahead of us and not try and score some minor points here and there.

(Hon Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, many of those Honourable Members on the other side did not care about the sugar industry in the 70s and the 80s. What did the 1987 *coup* do to the sugar industry? Where are the people who were at the forefront of it? Probably only Honourable Singh and Honourable Prasad were concerned about it. They were concerned about them, Madam Speaker. They always talk about; “If only you should have done something in 10 years’ time.”

Many of these issues, Madam Speaker, are generational, they take decades to address. They do not understand simple economics. It does not happen overnight ...

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... and suddenly, they are now weeping for the sugar industry, but many of them were part of the process that did not address those fundamental issues.

So, Madam Speaker, the deaths are regrettable. We feel for the families, Madam Speaker, but the point is, we need to have in place measures to address the fact that these issues should not take place in the workplace, and the Honourable Minister has already addressed that, Tate and Lyle is addressing that, and Madam Speaker, we need the mills to progress, and we will ensure, of course, as Government that at all times, and in all sectors, not just the sugarcane industry, that deaths at work are reduced and accidents are minimised, Madam Speaker, and because of that, Madam Speaker, I do not support the motion. Thank you.

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

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

Madam Speaker, there are so much theatrics. The truth is, the \$600 million was not granted because of the *coup* period. There is no polishing to make your status better than what you did to this country, so forget it.

Now, when you talk about the issue, you people ridicule the deaths of people, the families’ sufferring. You say, ‘Ho, ho! ho!’, that is what you said. You laughed when you mentioned that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Yes!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- (Inaudible)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- No, no! What you are doing, you are ridiculing the deaths of the families here in Fiji.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- May I rise on a Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, I am speaking, and I want....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Point of Order, Point of Order!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- May we hear the Point of Order, please?

HON. A. SAYED. KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, he needs to speak through you. He wants to address me directly, I suggest that he speaks through you, Madam Speaker, not to personalise matters.

HON. SPEAKER..- Thank you. I am sure that ....

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Honourable Minister, make sure that you do the same also in your future deliberation. Sometimes, you start pointing at us as well.

Madam Speaker, I am emphasising that when we address this issue, it is an issue of death. People are suffering, so it is very important for us to find avenues to reduce that death. What is wrong? Are you scared about something? What we need to do is to address that.

What I want to raise here, Madam Speaker, is; if the people who work in the Mill have raised their concerns and this is the type of response coming from the Government of the day, it is ridiculous! Why are you doing that? So this is a call of the people asking you to better your services in the industry ...

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA... because from farming, from the Mill, it is all working below the line. That is why we are not profiting in this business because you are not, in any way, have any experience in running this business. What you should do is refer this to those people who are experts – the Committees that are run by sugarcane workers, people who work under the corporate arrangement of their sugar mills because they know things better than you. Your interference has caused and created this havoc!

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Madam Speaker, I think this is a very sensible motion from Honourable Prem Singh, and I agree with the Honourable Attorney-General that death in any circumstances is regrettable.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Good!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I also agree with him that this motion does not take away the fact that we should be concerned about deaths in other places and in other circumstances, they are all very important.

I was a bit surprised with the logic in opposing this motion from the Government side and in fact, Honourable O'Connor, said, "negligence", he did not quite say negligence on who's part, but I assume that he was referring to negligence on the part of those who died. But negligence does not only rest on the person who suffers or dies in an accident, negligence also reflects on the circumstances - the infrastructure, the facilities, the safety measures that the Management provides for people who work in different circumstances and in this particular case, in the sugar Mills. So, it is very important to put this issue into perspective.

Also Madam Speaker, the call for an independent audit, and if I can correct the Honourable Attorney-General on this, we are not asking for a Parliamentary inquiry. All the motion is saying is that, have an independent audit and that could mean an independent body or independent set of people, it does not have to be a Parliamentary Committee. I think that would also help to deal with some of the broader issues within FSC, Madam Speaker.

The other issue that we keep hearing from the Honourable Prime Minister and in fact, the Honourable Prime Minister has reported according to the *Fiji Sun*, he talks about a conga line of politicians, ridiculing the so-called reform of the Sugar Industry Bill. I think the speech writers of the Honourable Prime Minister forgot that he himself might be leading a conga group of politicians lined up, determining the future of the industry in this country. He has to be careful with what he is saying because the politicisation of the industry can mean different things, Madam Speaker. I mean the other side, are a group of politicians as well. They are dealing with the industry, so when we talk about politicisation of the industry, they should be careful with what they mean by that, because they could be labelled as a Government which has thoroughly politicised the industry. As I had said in Parliament during the second reading of the Sugar Cane Industry Bill, that it is taking complete political control of the industry.

Madam Speaker, let me come back to the motion itself. The motion also identifies the problems with FSC. It extends beyond just accidents and the efficiency of the Mills. I think the Government cannot escape the fact that they are the majority shareholders (68 percent of FSC is owned by Government), and Government has a responsibility to address some of those issues that have been highlighted, not only in this particular case but in other circumstances as well.

Madam Speaker, this is a very tragic case and this is why we have brought this motion because we want FSC to take this seriously, deal with some of the pressing issues within the FSC and within the Mills to address those issues. So, it is not just about how deaths in other places or in other circumstances occur, it is about the management of FSC, Madam Speaker. We know and we have raised this in this Parliament. I mean, it took FSC three years to compile their Annual Report. In fact, three years to call an annual General Meeting (AGM). The last AGM for three years that they had was in 2015, I think it was in May. So, the structure and management of FSC ought to be responsible for these kind of issues within the Mills and I beg to differ with the Honourable Attorney-General when we talked about the so-called Executive Chairman.

Madam Speaker, the FSC is run by an Executive Chairman of the Board. So, you have the Board and the CEO as the same. This CEO of FSC is the Chairman of the Board. I mean, there are governance issues, Madam Speaker. You have a CEO, you have a Board, you have a Minister responsible for the Board, the Board looks at policy issues and the Board determines a broad agenda and the execution or the management of the organisation is done by the CEO. Alright, some organisations might have done well

under Executive Chairman arrangement but that is not the variable. That may not be the only variable which explains the profitability of that organisation.

We need to look at this very, very carefully and I think this motion is in good faith. It is a motion which is basically calling for the Government to ask FSC to have an independent audit before the crushing season because it may help FSC to find and address other issues that farmers always complain about and Honourable Gavoka talked about it.

Madam Speaker, the logic that I hear from the other side for refusing to support this motion, does not appeal to me at all. In fact, this was a very simple, clear request on behalf of the Opposition, and Government really should have supported this motion.

Madam Speaker, I support this motion and I hope that some Honourable Members on the other side can change their minds and vote for the motion.

HON. A.T. VADEL.- There are scared.

(Hon. Member interjects)

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

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Thank you Madam Speaker.

I also wish to record my support for this motion and the independent audit is required because we have all heard about how important the industry is to us and to the thousands of people, and the national economy as a whole, how it has been affected over the years and who better to quote, Madam Speaker, than a recent report that the FSC Executive Chairman, Mr. Khan, gave some figures to a meeting in Turkey last week on behalf of the Minister for Sugar, who is also the Honourable Prime Minister. He said that the total losses was \$163.35 million in the aftermath of *TC Winston*. Also, in saying that, Madam Speaker, he boasted about sugar production cost being cut by 30 percent by the current Government and in those cuts, Madam Speaker, you can deduce that there is a high possibility that OHS would be one of those to suffer the most.

Madam Speaker, for those reasons I support the motion. I heard the Honourable Attorney-General talked about the renewal of leases and I have been informed, Madam Speaker, that in the last 10 years, no other government has managed to record such low renewals of leases. Madam Speaker, no other government, so I do not know why he is whining about governments' prior to that ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.-... and the biggest amount of losses in the industry, Madam Speaker, has occurred in the last 10 years and not before that.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- Madam Speaker, if how they put it has, in fact, or did occur that previous Governments from 1987 until they took over in 2006 were responsible for doing all those bad things as they put it to the sugar industry, we would not have one by the time they took over in 2006. However, it was thriving and doing very well until they came in, according to the figures, at least, in terms of production and lease renewals.

On a final note, Madam Speaker, no other government has ever tried to take over control of the Growers Council or the money that belongs to the growers, the Growers Fund.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.- No other Government, Madam Speaker. No other Government has tried to disenfranchise or not hear the voices of the growers in relation to their own industry and for those reasons, Madam Speaker...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You have to answer that! (Facing and talking to the Government side)

HON. ROKO T.T.S. DRAUNIDALO.-... I will support the motion for an independent audit of mill operations to look into the operations of FSC.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, there being no other input, I now give the floor to the Honourable Prem Singh to speak in reply.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you. Madam Speaker.

I do not know why anything on sugar that has been brought up by the Opposition is always taken out of context by the other side. The only mantra they have is; “It will politicise, you are politicising”, but we all know for a fact how the industry was politicised after 2006, Madam Speaker, and I leave it there.

Madam Speaker, listening to the debate on the motion, it is a very simple motion and it has been turned as ‘that the Parliament will audit’. No! If you read the motion, it says that Parliament agrees to an independent audit of FSC Mills. Nowhere does it say that Members of Parliament will audit. We agree to an independent auditor, auditing the safety and concerns of the workers in the Mills. This is the motion that some of our learned colleagues from the other side should listen to.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, I was listening to the Honourable Minister when he talked about the probability of accidents. I thought the Honourable Minister would have been more proactive. We all sympathise with these deaths, they should not have occurred. I was expecting the Honourable Minister to say that we should have zero tolerance for it in our Mills and then justify it.

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. P. SINGH.- All he said was, (according to him) he thought that accidents and deaths in the Mills are normal, which is not, Madam Speaker!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P. SINGH.- You cannot draw a line on their ....

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. P. SINGH.- In fact, there is a distinctive feature of this.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, if I may continue, I will quote from the last paragraph of Page 1834 of the *Daily Hansard* on 27th August, 2015, on what the Honourable Minister said in his Ministerial Statement, and I quote:

“...these recent incidents in the Fiji Sugar Corporation Mills in Ba and Lautoka highlight the need to develop, establish and sustain a safe and healthy work-related culture and attitude within the workplace by all stakeholders in order that as a nation, we can prevent and avoid injuries and fatalities which inevitably result in low morale and productivity.

It is not only nine months that the Honourable Minister has changed his tune.

(Chorus of interjections)

(Hon. Member interjects)

HON. P. SINGH.- It is the Government’s policy.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, this is one of the reasons why fair trade premiums have been reduced because the Mills were not OHS compliant. That is a reality and that is the fact which will remain with us.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P. SINGH.- You cannot take that away. Fair trade premiums have been taxed by, at least, 50 percent and this year (2016) as I speak, there is no premium coming. This is one of the reasons.

(Laughter)

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P. SINGH.- I think the other side was taking it so lightly, they are making jokes about it. It is not a laughing matter anymore. It is the poor workers in the mill, the farmers and the stakeholders who rely on it are the people who will be affected and not these people (referring to Government Members), who sit here on fat salaries, Madam Speaker. They can do whatever they want with their salaries, but in these instances, the farmers get paid over 18 months. I know the Honourable Lorna Eden will tell you whilst during the consultation process on how farmers came up and expressed their emotions, as Honourable Gavoka had stated to you.

You have to be in their shoes sometimes. Come out of your ivory towers! Visit them sometimes and you will see. I tell you, you will have second thoughts about the Sugar Cane Industry Bill.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, this motion is a very simple one, it is about safety concerns at our sugar mills, which not only impact the welfare of the workers but also affect the performance of the Mills. One of the greatest concerns in the sugar industry is the performance of the Mills. These Mills are not fixed now where we used to have 14 hours of stoppages every week.

(Chorus of interjections)



HON. P. SINGH.-All of us want a smooth 2006 crushing season, so this motion is about enabling that. All we are asking is that the OHS compliance be accessed through an independent audit where every mill goes through it.

The Honourable Brij Lal talked about our visit to the Labasa Mill, it was a very good tour. We had two hours of visitation and two hours of grog session.

(Laughter)

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, in that two hours of grog session, we did a one-to-one with the Mill Management and they expressed other views as well, which I cannot express here because they are not here.

Madam Speaker, this motion is designed in such a way so that we have a smooth running 2016 crushing season. It will help both, the Government side and the Opposition to, at least, show some concern to the workers. I do not think any of the mill workers are happy with what has happened so far.

Madam Speaker, an independent audit will just do this and I hope that all the issues that have been raised in this debate will (at least) show that we do show concern to our workers and mill workers deserve better. I am not for a moment saying that we are not concerned about other workers in other industries, factories, mills and mines but they have provisions where they can be taken care of, and I am sure the Ministry is looking at that. However, for this purpose, Madam Speaker, I strongly feel that we need an independent audit for two reasons; first, we do not know what the Terms of Reference for the Tate & Lyle Auditors are and, second; we do not know what the OHS Team's (the inspectors) Terms of Reference are, but what we are concerned about in this motion is to set up an audit for the safety, security and for the general overall performance of the Mill efficiency.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote on the Honourable Prem Singh's motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- The question is, that in light of five accidents ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote on the Honourable Prem Singh's motion and the question is, that:

“In in light of five accidents resulting in three deaths in the last two years in Fiji Sugar Corporation's Mills, the Parliament agrees to an independent audit of the FSC's Mills before the start of the 2016 current crushing season, focusing on mill operations and Occupational Health and Safety procedures.”

Does any Honourable Members oppose the Motion?

(Chorus of ayes and noes)

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

Question put.

Votes Cast:

Ayes - 16

Noes	-	28
Not Voted	-	6

Motion defeated.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. That completes all the Items in today's Order Paper and I thank you all very much, Honourable Members, for your participation in today's Sitting.

Parliament is, therefore, adjourned until 9.30 tomorrow morning.

The Parliament adjourned at 3.47 p.m.