

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**



## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

### **DAILY HANSARD**

**MONDAY, 16TH APRIL, 2018**

**[CORRECTED COPY]**

# CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Minutes	1088
Communications from the Chair	1088-1089
Presentation of Reports & Certain Documents	1089
Questions	1090-1118
<u>Oral Questions</u>	
1. Uniformity in Prices – Meningococcal Vaccine <i>(Question No. 110/2018)</i>	
2. Strategies to Address Yaqona Shortage <i>(Question No. 112/2018)</i>	
3. Fiji Airways Fleet – Catalyst for Economic Development <i>(Question No. 113/2018)</i>	
4. Moratorium on Fishing in MPAs <i>(Question No. 114/2018)</i>	
5. Number of Damaged Schools <i>(Question No. 115/2018)</i>	
6. Government Plan-Kidney Transplant <i>(Question No. 116/2018)</i>	
<u>Written Questions</u>	
1. Fijian Students on Medical Scholarship – Cuba and Romania <i>(Question No. 118/2018)</i>	
3. 99-Year Leases – TLTB and Land Bank <i>(Question No. 119/2018)</i>	
3. Development Works – Navua Town <i>(Question No. 120/2018)</i>	
4. Meningococcal Meningitis Disease - Number of Cases <i>(Question No. 121/2018)</i>	
Review of International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights & International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights	1118
Review Report – FEA Annual Report 2015	1118-1131

## MONDAY, 16TH APRIL, 2018

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

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

### PRESENT

Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications; Minister for Education, Heritage, Arts & Library Services and National Archives of Fiji  
Hon. Rosy Sofia Akbar, Minister for Health and Medical Services  
Hon. Mereseini Rakuita Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation  
Hon. Commander Semi Tuleca Koroilavesau, Minister for Fisheries  
Hon. Osea Naiqamu, Minister for Forests  
Hon. Jone Usamate, Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations  
Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Waterways  
Hon. Alexander David O'Connor, Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services  
Hon. Commander Joweli Ratulevu Cawaki, Assistant Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management  
Hon. Iliesa Delana, Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports  
Hon. Lorna Eden, Assistant Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment  
Hon. Vijay Nath, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport  
Hon. Parmod Chand  
Hon. Mohammed Mursalinul Abe Dean  
Hon. Jiosefa Dulakiverata  
Hon. Viliame Rogoibulu Gavoka  
Hon. Semesa Druavesi Karavaki  
Hon. Ro Teimumu Vuikaba Kepa  
Hon. Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki  
Hon. Jilila Nalibu Kumar  
Hon. Dr. Brij Lal  
Hon. Ratu Naiqama Tawake Lalabalavu  
Hon. Alvik Avhikrit Maharaj  
Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua  
Hon. Alivereti Nabulivou  
Hon. Ruveni Nadabe Nadalo  
Hon. Niko Nawaikula  
Hon. Mataiasi Akoula Niumataiwalu  
Hon. Howard Robin Thomas Politini  
Hon. Prof. Biman Chand Prasad  
Hon. Aseri Masivou Radrodro  
Hon. Salote Vuibureta Radrodro  
Hon. Lt. Col. Netani Rika  
Hon. Dr. Mere Tuisalalo Samisoni  
Hon. Balmindar Singh  
Hon. Prem Singh  
Hon. Ashneel Sudhakar  
Hon. Anare Tuidraki Vadei  
Hon. Samuela Bainikalou Vunivalu  
Hon. Mikaele Rokosova Leawere

### Absent

Hon. Josai Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs  
 Hon. Lt. Col. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management and Meteorological Services  
 Hon. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, Minister for National Security and Defence  
 Hon. Faiyaz Siddiq Koya, Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism and Lands and Mineral Resources  
 Hon. Hon. Parveen Bala Kumar, Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport  
 Hon. Lt. Col. Laisenia Bale Tuitubou, Minister for Youth and Sports  
 Hon. Veena Kumar Bhatnagar, Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation  
 Hon. Viam Pillay, Assistant Minister for Agriculture

### MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Friday, 16th March, 2018 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

### COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

#### Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to the April period.

I also welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching proceedings on television and the internet and listening to the radio.

Honourable Members, we have with us this morning the USP PL100 students. Welcome to your Parliament and I hope that you will enjoy today's proceedings.

#### Request – Deferment of Tabling of Report

Honourable Members, will note that the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights had requested for his Standing Committee to provide its report on the Registration of Sex Offenders Bill, Bill No. 6 of 2018 in the May sitting of Parliament. The Business Committee at its meeting last Friday unanimously agreed to the request taking into consideration the difficulty faced by the Standing Committee in having public consultations around the country due to the recent disaster.

Honourable Members, I therefore resolve that the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights will table its report in the May sitting after which the Bill will be debated and voted upon.

### Responses to Written Questions

For the information of Honourable Members, the Secretariat has responded to Written Questions:

- a) 23 of 2018;
- b) 77 of 2018;
- c) 88 of 2018; and
- d) 98 of 2018.

These responses have been conveyed accordingly to the Honourable Members who asked them.

### Bula Lunch – Hong Kong

Lastly, I returned from attending a meeting with the Legislative Council of Hong Kong, accompanied by the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation and the Assistant Minister for Rural and Maritime Development. Whilst there, we were invited to attend the launch of the *Bula* Lunch, a platform to promote Fiji in terms of tourism and investment.

The *Bula* Lunch was also attended by some prominent people in Hong Kong and at this juncture, I would like to acknowledge Mr. Nicky Little, a former Fiji rugby representative; Mr. D.J. Forbes, a former New Zealand's 7s representative; and Mr. Deacon Manu, a former Fiji rugby representative who were there as part of the promotion and supporting Fiji.

I also wish to acknowledge Fiji's Honorary Consul and the members of the Fiji Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, as well as the Fijian Embassy staff in the People's Republic of China, who were part of the promotion planning process which was a great success, especially in the promotion of our beloved Fiji. Thank you, Honourable Members.

## **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS**

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations to table his Reports.

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

1. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment 2012 Annual Report; and
2. Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment 2013 Annual Report.

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

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment 2012 Annual Report and the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment 2013 Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

I have been informed that there are no Committee Reports for presentation today.

## QUESTIONS

### Oral Questions

#### Uniformity in Prices - Meningococcal Vaccine (Question No. 110/2018)

HON. P. CHAND asked the Government, upon notice:

Would the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources inform Parliament what steps are being taken by the Ministry in ensuring that there is uniformity in prices of Meningococcal vaccines retailed by pharmacies?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Acting Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for this question. As we all know and we are indeed very concerned about the Meningococcal Strain C which has actually hit Fiji and we have seen some cases and numbers increase in that respect.

Madam Speaker, the prices of goods in Fiji are not controlled by Government, it is actually controlled by the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC) which is an independent body. There are certain medicines that are actually price-controlled and there are certain medicines that are not price-controlled. In this particular instance, Meningococcal vaccine is not price-controlled per se because it is not a vaccine that is being used or not required everyday.

The Honourable Member would also know, I assume, that the Meningococcal vaccine requires what we call a “cold chain storage”, in other words, the vaccines need to be actually kept below a particular temperature level. Not all the pharmacies in Fiji import the Meningococcal vaccine, only some of them do, only some have the capacity to do so and the prices as you see, Madam Speaker, have, in fact, varied. Initially it was quite expensive, we saw that some pharmacies quite unethically were charging something up to \$350 a particular vial of vaccine.

We have seen recently, Madam Speaker, that the pricing has actually dropped from what it was originally and currently the pricing as we know has now dropped and I have got the figures here. The average market price falling from \$240 to \$245 range to \$195 to \$218 range within a week. One particular pharmacy, we understand, was currently selling at \$150 a vial.

So in that respect, Madam Speaker, what the Commission did was actually went out to all the pharmacies, looking at where they are buying their vaccines from, working closely with Fiji Revenue and Customs Services (FRCS) to see where they are buying from and what is the landed cost, and seeing how much of a margin they are putting on it.

Of course, Madam Speaker, like I said, some of them actually do not have the capacity so they are not necessarily selling it. Some of them actually in order for them to sell it, have to go out and, sort of, acquire more cold storage facilities. Of course, pharmacies, for example, in Vanua Levu will have a high cost in respect of the freight and ensuring that the vials actually go from Viti Levu to Vanua Levu that along the way, the cold chain storage is not broken because it does add to additional cost in that respect. So they are being monitored and the Commission is actually working in that respect.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary questions? Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I think the Honourable Minister referred to that price of \$350, it is right. There is a pharmacy in the Western Division, which is buying it for \$150 and selling it for \$325. Does the Honourable Minister consider that a fraud or just an offence under FCCC and would the Government do something about it?

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Could he please repeat the question?

HON. PROFESSOR B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I have said an example of a pharmacy buying vaccine for \$150 and selling it for \$325 at the height of the news that this disease was discovered. Would that be considered as fraud or just an offence under FCCC? How would the Government treat that?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is not a fraud, Madam Speaker, indeed, it is not even an offence per se. Offences only arise if a particular item is price-controlled, and if it is gazetted to be price-controlled then you have certain margins that are allowed on it and if you sell beyond that margin, then it becomes an offence and the Commission, of course, then issues spot fines. So that \$325 was in the beginning no longer being sold for \$325, and I think it was the *Fiji Sun* that published the price.

There are different prices in the different pharmacies that are actually selling that, and I think that has brought about some sort of what we call, 'name and shame'. So other people have now known that, "All right in Nadi, we have one pharmacy that may be selling at \$325 but the other one is selling at \$180." So everyone obviously rushes to buy the vials from there but no one goes to the \$325 pharmacy.

Madam Speaker, also I have to inform Honourable Members that there is a huge outbreak of Meningococcal in Africa. To those Honourable Members who may not necessarily understand, we have seen D Strain, we have seen C Strain, but the C Strain actually comes from Asia and it is a new strain that has actually come to Fiji.

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that, to probably put Honourable Members' worries to rest, the Government also Cabinet, has already approved the purchase or procurement of vaccines to vaccinate every single Fijian from 19 years and below. That is approximately over 345,000 Fijians who will be vaccinated.

In order to be able to access that level of vaccine, we are working together with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Currently, WHO and UNICEF are, in fact, trying to source these drugs for us. As you know, all these drugs or vaccine are actually made by large pharmaceutical companies in the private sector and because there is a huge demand also in Africa, there is worldwide demand for these vaccines, therefore, it has a huge impact on pricing. These pharmacies that are currently selling it on an individual basis are procuring it individually. We, as Government, are going to go through WHO and UNICEF.

What is really interesting, Madam Speaker, is the indicative price that WHO and UNICEF gave us only a few weeks ago, they are now wanting to revise that. Not just that, we had originally approved \$10 million, we may now need to approve up to \$40 million because of the huge pressure on the accessibility of these vaccines. There are two issues; one is the pricing and other one, of course, is the actual stockpile of these vaccines being made available.

In fact, I also spoke to the Acting Permanent Secretary for Health this morning. The Acting Permanent Secretary and her team are actually having a meeting with WHO and UNICEF today and because they are now saying that they may not have available all the vials as is required to vaccinate all Fijians who are 19 years and below, that is the other story at play, but these are the small stockpile that is available through the private pharmacies. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, it appears to me that the range is between \$150 to \$352, and even at \$150 it is still a lot, and the Honourable Minister is saying that price control is not an option. Could you inform the House as to why price control is not an option?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I never said it was not an option, all I said was that at the moment, it is not price-controlled.

Madam Speaker, for the information of Honourable Members, the pricing that we will get from WHO and UNICEF obviously will be a different pricing. Initially, they had said to us that it will be US\$10 a vial, but now it can go as high as US\$40 or US\$50 a vial, we do not know. So as we said, there is a huge pressure on the pricing. Even buying through agencies like WHO and UNICEF, we obviously do not want to pre-empt any of the pricing that we will get from them, but that is the pricing situation at the moment worldwide.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, given the fact that (I will come back to the original question) there is no price control on these vaccines, we have seen on many occasions when there is an outbreak, for example, we had an outbreak of the Zika virus in 2016 where we saw the discrepancy and inconsistency in pricing by the pharmacies. So in view of that, is the Government thinking along the lines of making submissions to FCCC to bring these medicine under price control?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I have already answered the question. What I said was that, the FCCC at the moment is actually monitoring the pricing, and we are actually going behind the scenes and looking at what price they are they landing the vaccines at, and see what margins they are charging.

Madam Speaker, the other thing you do not want to do is to discourage them from actually bringing it because if they stop bringing it, someone will say, "Hang on, we are not going to bring it." So then you will not have any supply at all. The idea is to get this, sort of, balancing act right and the FCCC at the moment is monitoring them, they are working with the FRCS, to see what we can do. Of course, we will get some level of comfort, once we are able to get a stockpile through the WHO and UNICEF suppliers.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Salote Radrodro?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, the vaccine, as alluded to by the Honourable Minister is very expensive and the death rate is even higher than dengue. Can the Honourable Minister confirm if the Government is looking at the option of including this vaccine under the Free Medicine List,



while the Government sort out its act in terms of price control and in terms of accessibility with WHO and UNICEF?

HON. SPEAKER.- Acting Prime Minister, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, there is another question on Meningococcal, I understand tomorrow, for the Honourable Minister for Health and she can give a full brief in respect of that.

We dispute what you are saying but nonetheless, Madam Speaker, in respect of the outbreak, et cetera, I am focussing more on the pricing itself, and that is the ambit of this question. But, of course, it is not what you call, “the outbreak season of the Meningococcal”, it is not an outbreak per se. I think, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister for Health is the best person to address this issue from the health perspective.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, we hear from the Government side that we may need to vaccinate about 345,000 people and it is likely to cost \$40 million. Can we get the assurance from Government that if it comes to \$40 million, et cetera, money is not going to be an issue?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, because we are such a prudent Government and manage our finances so well, we are always able to cater for such expenses.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, in terms of affordability and accessibility to low income earners, whether the availability of the vaccine is addressed at the public hospitals and health centres?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, again, the Honourable Minister for Health will be the best person to answer this question in respect of the measures that are being taken by the Ministry of Health, I am more focussed on pricing.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that, the most vulnerable are those of the younger age. As you know that there were a number of cases reported at a boarding school up in the Northwest of Viti Levu and that is where vulnerability takes place. So this is why Government has taken a very bold decision to actually vaccinate those Fijians who are below the age of 19. They should have the first right of access to those vaccines but the Honourable Minister for Health will actually address this issue tomorrow.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other question, I now give the floor to the Honourable Alivereti Nabulivou to ask his question.

Provision of a Comprehensive and Effective Health Response  
(Question No. 111/2018)

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

The Government is building up our health system to improve on its services and working conditions. Can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform this House if our health system with measures in place, be able to provide a comprehensive and effective health response in the event of a disaster or communicable disease outbreak?

HON. R.S. AKBAR (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Madam Speaker, if you would allow me to just take a couple of minutes to address some of the issues mentioned by the Honourable Members regarding Meningococcal outbreak and the vaccine.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, please, can you just limit yourself to the question that is being asked?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- My apologies, Madam Speaker. In answer to the question posed by the Honourable Member, my answer would be “yes”, and because we are talking about communicable diseases which are not only prevalent during disasters but it is an ongoing approach that is taken to focus on primary prevention and control throughout the year.

When it comes to natural disasters and when we talk about communicable diseases, Madam Speaker, we are looking at typhoid, dengue fever, leptospirosis, diarrhoea, influenza, measles, to name a few, and these are not only post-disasters but these are ongoing communicable diseases that are prevalent in the country. So it is very important to understand the disease patterns that arise after the natural disasters to see how these could be addressed by the re-emerging diseases. So the Ministry of Health has a Fiji National Communicable Disease Surveillance Team and an Outbreak Response Guidelines whereby we have strategies and operational guides for the disease surveillance and how to respond to that.

Madam Speaker, in the event of a disaster, we co-ordinate this with NDMO and other agencies that are part of the Disaster Response Team and we have our own Health Emergency and Disaster Plan and accompanying standard operational procedures. We also have the activation of Health Emergency Operation Centre that is operated 24 hours during times of disasters and this was also done during the recent natural disasters namely, *TC Gita*, *TC Josie*, the flooding in the West and most recently during *TC Keni*.

What happens, Madam Speaker, in response to outbreaks of communicable diseases, we look at early warnings, investigate the responses and timely notification. The team also provides weekly reports from 34 specific sites that are indicators to outbreak from diseases, as well as event-based surveillance and, of course, direct reports by the media and the technicians.

Madam Speaker, these systems are also complemented by other surveillance systems, including laboratory-based surveillance. We have teams in our various divisions, Madam Speaker, they are responsible for addressing outbreaks in their own areas and, of course, coordinated at the national level by the Fiji Centre for Communicable Diseases, and this is led by the National Adviser on Communicable Diseases.

Madam Speaker, guidance during outbreaks is also obtained from well-established groups of local and international experts, as well as the Divisional Outbreak Response Teams and the National Taskforce for NCD Outbreak and its Technical working Group.

Madam Speaker, we work with a lot of donor agencies as well and they are normally the WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP. We also work with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Medical

Services Pacific, Live and Learn, Red Cross, Oxfam and other faith-based and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that provide collaborative support in a timely and transparent manner.

Madam Speaker, the action that is taken by the Ministry and other co-ordinated agencies is looking at immediate priorities during disasters and that is, the provision of safe drinking water. The teams were on the ground during the recent outbreaks distributing water purification tablets, water-holding containers, non-food items including soap because we believe, a lot of these communicable diseases could be best avoided through best hygiene and hand-washing practices.

Yes, we had trauma care available, provision of medicine and medical supplies and strengthened surveillance for selected communicable disease outbreaks. If I could just give you an example, recently, the team visited Nawaka Tramline Back Road in Nadi which is an informal settlement and we were shocked to see the amount of rubbish that is normally accumulated during outbreaks. We believe these are some of the reasons why we have outbreaks of dengue and other waterborne diseases.

We normally talk to the communities and try to assist them in the best possible ways to keep their surroundings clean. Of course, our communication plans are such that we target those areas where our teams go and carry out health checks and give advice on things that the communities and individuals can do to ensure that we are able to have a control on any communicable disease, like clearing blocked drains, cleaning up of their homes and environments.

We found out that these areas which are struck by floods in heavy rainfall are mostly breeding grounds for a lot of diseases like typhoid, diarrhoea and dengue, so we have outreach teams who are on the ground. They visited not only 500 communities, but also go around shops for food surveillance because we believe that a lot of communicable diseases also rise during post-disaster because of the consumption of food. A lot of people try to salvage food and we try to tell people it is better that these food are disposed of because they will lead to diseases, such as diarrhoea and typhoid.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Leawere?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to ask the Honourable Minister as to whether the teams that go out and conduct health checks, are also immunised in order to prevent them from these outbreaks of diseases after the cyclone?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, I do not understand what the Honourable Member means, what immunisation he is talking about and if he can be clear, I should be able to answer that?

HON. SPEAKER.- Would you like to repeat your question?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, the question is, are your teams of workers immunised as well when they carry out their duties as you mentioned after the cyclone?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and Honourable Member, are you talking about the immunisation of health workers?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Yes.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- I think the health teams are better prepared to deal with the situation as and when it arises and immunisation is basically carried out during outbreaks of typhoid. We do not have immunisation during dengue, et cetera, so typhoid is basically one outbreak where we need the people who are affected to be immunised.

As I said, most of these communicable diseases, Madam Speaker, are preventable. It is just good hygiene and best hand-washing practices so that is what they try to promote and I am sure my teams are fully geared up to prevent themselves from catching those diseases.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, we are talking here about responses to disasters and the question is whether the budget is always there to assure people that it is all in good hands. We can be very glib about our replies to questions like that about money but the fact of the matter is that, people are concerned about the cost of MenC. There is consternation in the community right now so do you have the budget, can we be assured that whenever we have a disaster, Government has the money to mitigate or meet it?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I think the Honourable Minister for Economy has already answered that, and if I can restate, yes, as a Ministry we are ready with the financial budgetary allocations to deal with any outbreaks and disasters.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I thank the Honourable Minister for the response. The original question is, what is the timely, comprehensive and effective responses? I am glad that the Honourable Minister mentioned a settlement in Nawaka, in the Backroad of Nadi. As part of the responses, Nadi Rural Local Authority is tasked with looking after that area in terms of flood prevention, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, the responses that we talked about the post-disaster responses. The Honourable Minister mentioned the blocked drains, waterways around the place so Nadi Rural Local Authority should, in a proactive measure, address that. We still see after the disaster that it is still there. What is the Ministry doing to engage itself to be more proactive?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, the reason why I mentioned Nawaka Tramline Settlement, it is not only one of the settlements that the Team had visited, actually we visited a lot of settlements. When we visited these informal settlements, we found out that there is a real issue of garbage disposal. I mean, these are settlements where people actually bought or leased the land from landowners, I am not sure, and I stand to be corrected there. But they have connections to water supply and connections to electricity but when these settlements are established, there is a very little importance given to garbage disposal.

I have spoken to the people and they have come up with the solution, that they are going to work with the Nadi Rural Authority or any other Rural Authority. They said they will be responsible for disposal of the garbage, but where do they dispose? That is the question, Madam Speaker. So we are going around the country meeting these informal settlements and trying to advise them on how best it can work.

As for the Nadi Rural Authority or any Rural Authority, we cannot charge money for garbage disposal there. By law, we cannot charge informal settlements to pay for their garbage disposal, so the solution lies within the people and we are working with the people as to how best they can collect their own levy and work with the local service providers so that the garbage could be disposed, so that is solution base. I do not believe in this blame game, who is supposed to do that.

I went and spoke to the people. If there is a drain and people plant cassava and *dalo* there, I mean, it is a simple thing, so community ownership of their problem is something that we are trying to promote and trying to create more awareness and how best communities can come up with a solution. I understand we are talking about local rural authorities, we do not have that power to do those things because those are informal settlements.

Yes, we are trying to find solutions to that and communities are coming up very strongly and they are very receptive to the fact that they will be responsible for the disposal of their litter.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Members, please be reminded that you have only one minute to ask your question. It is with great reluctance that I have to cut you short within that one minute.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister...

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- ...on her explanations about the comprehensive health measures that had been announced. I just want to ask the Honourable Minister if these comprehensive health measures are genuinely effective, given there is always a delay in the announcement of the various outbreaks, like Meningococcal and dengue, that now seems to be on the rise on frequent occasions?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you Honourable Member for bringing that Meningococcal outbreak in.

Madam Speaker, outbreaks are not just announced overnight, normally we have to study the disease pattern. I will give you an example. In 2016, when there was an outbreak of MenC at St. John's College, but that was contained by the Health Team. As soon as it was diagnosed, tests were sent overseas, reports came back confirmed, the students were vaccinated and todate, Madam Speaker, we have had no cases from St. John's College. The outbreaks mostly happen in sporadic areas, so we just cannot declare an outbreak just like that. In 2016, there was an outbreak there, 2017, yes, the numbers were increasing so we declared an outbreak.

Now what has happened, Madam Speaker, the fear that has been generated in the public is great. I totally understand, people are scared because MenC or Meningococcal disease is life threatening. But, Madam Speaker, from the beginning, we have been saying that it is treatable, it can be treated with an antibiotic if detected early.

Unfortunately, I think the media has a role to play, the other side has a role to play in creating that panic within the people. From day one, Madam Speaker, we have been saying, our experts - WHO have been guiding us on this and based on their advice, we have been telling people, "Look, it can be treated. Any signs and symptoms, please present yourself," and we have done that. But unfortunately, because of the fear that it is a life threatening disease, people have been rushing down to pharmacies (as mentioned in the earlier update) and people have been making money out of that. But if I can assure the nation, like the Honourable Attorney-General said, it is treatable, it is controllable, we have antibiotics that actually cure people and it is free, yes, it is free. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Despite all that, Madam Speaker, the people are dying.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Last month, a 21 year old in Nausori died of dengue and she should not have died but because of the carelessness of the doctors, they cannot diagnose, bad attitude. So what internal programmes do you have to ensure that doctors know what they are doing?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You are killing them.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you very much, Honourable Member and thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it is absurd for someone to stand up and say, "Someone died of dengue." You need to look at it. Madam Speaker, it is very important to understand the complications of these cases. We have always said, please present yourselves early for detection, early detection saves life. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, there are cases of leptospirosis and dengue which reaches that late stage, unfortunately. People have died because of reaching the hospitals late and it is not right. I think it is not justified to just push the blame on people.

Madam Speaker, no one from the other side talks about preventing these things. I have not heard anyone talking about, "Let us go out and clean our communities." Madam Speaker, no one from the other side talks about, "Let us get communities cleaning up." These are preventable diseases, and these are caused by mosquitoes.

(Honourable N. Nawaikula interjects)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, I do not need to answer him.

It is very important for people to present early so that it can be detected.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Don't blame the doctors.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Yes, I mean, it is really absurd and sad. I am sure doctors are listening, they work hard trying to save lives.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- As I said, Madam Speaker, it is not a blame game, mosquitoes breed, people get bitten by mosquitoes but let us look at why do these mosquitoes breed, Madam Speaker. It is because we keep our environment dirty.

(Honourable Niko Nawaikula interjects)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- It is not about public health, Madam Speaker, it is about individual attitude.

(Honourable Niko Nawaikula interjects)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, it is about an individual's attitude. It is about attitude! We really need to be responsible for our health, not when we reach the hospital at the end stage and start this blame game. It is not about blame game, it is about saving lives. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. A pertinent issue coming out from the Honourable Minister's response is preventative. Can the Honourable Minister confirm whether all those areas that had been affected by the recent cyclone are now accessible to water, so that you can fulfil the obligation under SDG 6 – accessible to clean water and sanitation? What preventative measures are in place?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, I did mention that any response to any outbreak or disaster or natural disaster is a coordinated response. Yes, there are agencies working to ensure that communities are supplied with clean and safe drinking water. Those communities we have visited, Madam Speaker, we will be distributing water purification tablets to them so that the water they drink is safer.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki to ask his question.

Strategies to Address Yaqona Shortage  
(Question No. 112/2018)

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management and Meteorological Services inform the House, what are the strategies to address the *yaqona* shortage?

HON. O. NAIQAMU (Acting Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management and Meteorological Services).- Madam Speaker, as Acting Minister for Agriculture, I rise to respond to the question raised by the Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture has a specific programme known as the Yaqona Development Programme which was designed by the current Government to try and address the shortage of *yaqona* in the country. This commenced after the devastating effects of *TC Winston*. Activities includes sourcing of planting materials, agro input, *yaqona* nurseries and farmhouses. All the activities are forecasted on establishing and expansion of farms. As of today, more than 300,000 planting materials have been distributed to different locations around Fiji.

There is a renewed interest in farmers who are captivated to go into *yaqona* cultivation. Farmers are assisted in terms of materials for farmhouses, to allow them to stay in their own plantation, especially where access is a problem. The increase in production will be felt within the next one or two years.

We must also be mindful of the effects of climate change which can hamper our effort. However, the Ministry is confident that the current programme will address the shortage of *yaqona* in the not too distant future. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Just a very simple question, Madam Speaker. Does the Honourable Minister or the Ministry know the number of varieties of *yaqona* grown in Fiji and of those varieties, which are the fastest grown and whether the Ministry is putting a particular effort in those varieties so that instead of five years, it could be grown in three years?

HON. SPEAKER.- It is a statistical question, the onus is on the Minister.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture is fully aware the varieties of *yaqona* that are currently being distributed throughout the country.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Before I ask my question, in Savusavu, Madam Speaker, there is one person who will buy your *yaqona* at the cross road and another one near Kwongs and another one close to the market and they all employed by the same person, middlemen. So these are the people who are pushing the prices up. What measures does the Government has to address that?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, I think the Honourable Member is aware that the market is free for all the farmers. It is a benefit to the farmers and also to the consumers.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Dulakiverata?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question.

Madam Speaker, I was in Tailevu during the weekend and you will know that someone there is developing a nursery and the Ministry of Agriculture is promising to buy all the generated planting material from him but they have not turned up and he had to look for other alternatives to sell his products.

Madam Speaker, if the Government is to address the shortage of *yaqona*, then they should help the farmers or the people who have taken the initiative to develop the industry to provide planting materials to all the areas. Can I ask the Honourable Minister if the Tailevu project is very successful, why cannot it be encouraged in other areas to supply planting materials to the farmers?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, I think I have clearly outlined the process has been undertaken by the Ministry and has resulted in distributing more than 300,000 planting materials throughout the country.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, last question, Honourable Semesa Karavaki?



HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I ask the Honourable Minister when they are distributing the seedlings or the planting materials to the *yaqona* farmers, are they levying any fee to the farmers for those seedlings or are they being given out free?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Madam Speaker, can I come back to the Honourable Member on that question? I think it is a new question.

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

Fiji Airways Fleet – Catalyst for Economic Development  
(Question No. 113/2018)

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

After the current Tropical Cyclone Keni, can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications reassure the House that Fiji Airways fleet is safe and secure as it is the catalyst for economic development of the country?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Honourable Member for his question and indeed, he is absolutely correct in stating the huge importance of Fiji Airways to the Fijian economy.

Madam Speaker, Fiji Airways actually has a Fiji Airways Corporate Emergency Response Plan which covers both, Fiji Link and Fiji Airways in respect of such disasters that actually took place. Madam Speaker, suffice to say that:

- Out of the nine jet aircrafts that Fiji Airways had, they were all flown out with passengers during the actual crisis;
- All the eight turboprop Fiji Link domestic aircrafts were in the Hangar, locked down;
- We also parked 13 other local-operated aircrafts inside the Fiji Airways Hangar, including some of the helicopters.

So a total of about 21 aircrafts were locked down in Fiji Airways Hangar, some of them, of course, are owned privately and our jet aircrafts were all overseas.

These were some of the precautionary measures that were, of course, taken. Madam Speaker, there were numerous other measures that had taken place in respect of securing all the assets around the airports, to ensure that Fiji Airways continue to operate, as the disaster passed over Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I also would like to take the opportunity to highlight once again that Fiji Airways is the only airline that flies in to Fiji that operates immediately after any such natural disaster. All of the foreign aircrafts stopped flying, Fiji Airways is the only one that continues to fly, sometimes even quite rather precariously but, of course, conforming to all the CAAF required safety measures. So it is, therefore, very critical for us to ensure that we put our weight behind Fiji Airways and Fiji Airways has

some very good measures in place to ensure that it continues to fly and service our country and, indeed, our economy. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Parmod Chand?

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Speaker, part of the question is that it is the catalyst for economic development of the country. Domestic fares are very expensive; first eight Labasa to Suva would be somewhere about \$60 and then after that eight another fare. But even when the aircraft is empty and the seats are still available, it is more than \$300 or even \$400 one way. What is the Government doing about this because we consider it a monopoly, it is not very good for the country and that stops economic development too?

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it is not related to the substantive question but nonetheless, I will answer it. The Honourable Member does know that airfares to Labasa (I know he is only concerned about Labasa) has dropped and he has kind of partially acknowledged that. There is competition, I know the owner of Northern Airways was a former candidate of NFP, maybe that is why they are talking about it. Northern Airways also flies to Labasa, Madam Speaker, so there is competition. It is irresponsible for the Honourable Member to say that there is a monopoly on that route. There is no monopoly! Maybe, he needs to understand what monopoly means. Monopoly means when you have only one operator, but there are two operators. It is not a monopoly.

Madam Speaker, the reality is, Northern Air gets subsidised on other routes when it bids for it. Get your facts right! These people Madam Speaker, come here to further personal agendas, they are not here about what Fiji Airways and Fiji Link is doing. Madam Speaker, the Honourable ...

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The Honourable Attorney-General should stop referring this as a personal matter. It is an important question from the Honourable Member. The fares are very high and in a sense he is right.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What is your Point of Order?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So he should stop accusing ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What is your Point of Order?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ... us of having a personal agenda.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What is your Point of Order?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Then stop personalising the issue and stop referring to the owner of Northern Air being....

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! That is not a Point of Order.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is a Point of Order.

HON. SPEAKER.- No! That is not a Point of Order. Please, continue from where you left.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I would like to just deviate.

Madam Speaker, with respect, when you make a ruling and say it is not a Point of Order, an Honourable Member cannot say that it is a Point of Order. He is not the Speaker. The Speaker has said it is not a Point of Order and while sitting down he is saying it is a Point of Order. Who is he to say that? Who is he to say that when the, Madam Speaker, has said it is not a Point of Order. You are not the Speaker! Get it right!.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, this is not the first time that the Honourable Attorney-General ...

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD. - ... has referred to me as 'he is the Speaker, he is not the Speaker'.

HON. SPEAKER.- I am on my feet!

Honourable Member, a few instances in the past, you have not listened to the Point of Order or to the ruling by the Speaker and this time, you have done exactly the same, yet again. Therefore, under Standing Order 75, I now exercise my power to suspend you from Parliament for 10 minutes with immediate effect.

(Hon. Professor B.C. Prasad was suspended for 10 minutes)

Honourable Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker as I was saying, prices to Labasa has come down, Honourable Parmod Chand has acknowledged that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, prices to Labasa has come down.

HON. P. CHAND.- Only the first eight seats!

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! What is happening here? Yes, I do allow interjections but you must not disrupt the Honourable Member who is speaking.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, prices to Labasa has come down and you can go online and you can buy those. I suggest any Honourable Member who wants to fly to Labasa goes online and purchase those seats, in fact, the prices are even cheaper, Madam Speaker.

HON. P. CHAND.- A Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

The Honourable Attorney-General is misleading the House, it is not for the whole aircraft fare where prices have come down, it is only for the first eight seats, Madam Speaker. He should get his facts right. He should say that the whole aircraft fare is not the same.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

I think the Secretariat will have to distribute rules regarding Points of Order. Yet again, that does not qualify under the Point of Order process because you are talking on the content of the speech and not on the rules and procedures of the House. So, that is not a Point of Order and I make no ruling.

Please continue, Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I did not say the whole aircraft, I said prices to Labasa has come down. Airfares to Labasa has come down, Madam Speaker, it is a fact.

As I was saying, if you go online also and if you purchase your tickets way ahead of your travelling time, it is even further cheaper and many people have taken advantage of that, indeed, many people have actually congratulated Fiji Link for that.

Madam Speaker, also as we know that AFL is now putting night landing lights into Labasa, which means that frequency of flights can increase to Vanua Levu which means the economy can be further enhanced. But in order to have flights landing at night, there is a particular hill that is on the way, we need to put those lights there too and a certain level of that hill needs to be taken out.

The Honourable Member does know about that and that work is also being carried out, Madam Speaker. So a number of measures have taken place. The reality is that Fiji Link is not a monopoly into Labasa, Northern Airways does fly to Labasa also, Madam Speaker, so it is incorrect to say it is a monopoly.

Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, everyone also knows that the length of the runway in Wailevu, Labasa is not long enough for an ATR 72 to take a full load, everyone knows that. This is why we have been talking about an alternative site. Everyone also knows that in order to lengthen the runway at the current site, it is very, very difficult because you have that river that goes around the airstrip at the moment. Aswith Nausori, a 737 till today cannot take off at full load because the length is not long enough.

This is why at certain times when the load is quite high, you actually cannot take the full load and, therefore, sometimes you cannot take all the passengers. So once you actually have a runway that is the right size, you have night landing lights, you will be able to bring down the prices even further because an airline cannot make maximum returns if only certain number of seats can be sold, that is the point. That is what you call “economics”, that is what you call “financial management of an aircraft”, and they need to understand that and we have stated in this Parliament on a number of occasions. Thank you.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister advise us on the age of the fleet to ensure that they are safe?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, of course, the Honourable Member needs to be more specific on which aircraft is she talking about. Of course, when you talk about the age you can have different ages and the same as with the Opposition, they all have different ages but we can take an average age and I can tell you, the average age on this side is much smaller than the other side.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, but the point of the matter is that, Fiji Airways will be very soon with the arrival of the 737 MAXs, one of the youngest fleets in the world. Thank you, Madam Speaker, for airline our size.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- My question was on the age of the current fleet, not on the incoming one or the new one but on the current fleet that you are talking about. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- You asked a question and the question was answered. I now give the last question to the Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, Fiji Airways, also known as Air Pacific has been in operation for more than 50 years in Nadi and Fiji, and Fiji has had cyclones as regular as sunrise. What we are hearing today, is it something new that they are introducing as protective measures or is it what has been there for some time?

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, Fiji Airways is not known as Air Pacific. Fiji Airways is the operating name of Fiji Airways. It is known as Fiji Airways. They want to live in the past, they should not live in the past. It is now Fiji Airways. We need to be proud of the fact that it has got the name 'Fiji' in it. We should be proud of the fact that it got Fiji, not Air Pacific, it is Fiji Airways. That is the level of pride we need to have and that is why it is the national carrier.

Madam Speaker, in respect of the measures that are taken, anyone would know that when you are actually operating a modern day air fleet, you need to constantly change your emergency response measures. You need to constantly review that, and if that is what the question is about, that is the answer to that. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will now adjourn Parliament and break for refreshments and we will resume at 11 o'clock.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.32 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.00 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members, you may be seated. Honourable Members, just before we proceed, we will be without the sign language broadcast from now to lunch time as technicians are checking faulty cameras and we will have it ready after lunch.

We will move onto the next item on the agenda and that is the Honourable Gavoka to ask his question.

Moratorium on Fishing in MPAs  
(Question No. 114/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries explain to the House how effective is the moratorium on fishing in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU (Minister for Fisheries).- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the Honourable Gavoka for the question. With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I would just like to explain what MPAs are so that it would be clear to the Honourable Members.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are areas that have been put into reserve by the traditional fishing rights owners in their quest to preserve the natural resources within their *qoliqoli* areas. These areas include; marine parks where they have protected reefs, seagrass, seabeds, shipwrecks, archaeological sites, tidal lagoons, mudflats and mangrove areas.

In short answer to the question raised by the Honourable Member, yes, I would like to gladly say that this has been effective due to two main reasons:

1. The ability to legislate these areas. Through gazette, MPAs are able to be protected by laws. They give teeth to the management and option which supports the underlying goal of ensuring sustainability over depleting stocks.
2. Involvement of communities and other stakeholders, including NGOs which help in these community-based programmes. The programmes raise awareness and create that support that is required to protect these areas.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Jilila Kumar?

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; can the Honourable Minister explain how MPAs benefit fisheries?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The MPAs support and complement the initiatives that had been created within fisheries areas, especially in support of our stock management. The Ministry of Fisheries is able to coordinate and check the stock within the MPAs because they are protected and it is quite conclusive to understand when it is protected, we can take stock of the various species within the MPAs. Secondly, it improves the social-economic outcomes for our

local communities within the MPAs. Thirdly, it supports fisheries stability and the ability to create natural resources for future generations within the MPAs. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplementary question; how is the monitoring and securing of the MPAs in terms of poachers, night divers and mostly commercial fishermen who operate at night, given that the areas are large? How do they protect the MPAs?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. This is a challenge that the Ministry of Fisheries faces now, especially with the availability of modern communications. The protection and security of MPAs basically depend on the resource owners themselves.

When you have modern communications and the people from the MPAs are also involved in fishing and are able to communicate the conditions of MPAs and the availability of people who are normally looking after and providing patrols in the MPAs, this is the gap that we are trying to close when the coordination of these activities within the MPAs are coordinated through the modern communications that are available now.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Nabulivou, a supplementary question?

HON. A. NABULIVOU.- How do MPAs benefit the tourism industry?

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

Tourism industry is in the forefront of creating MPAs and working with the resource owners in protecting the areas within their own tourism area. I would like to thank the tourism stakeholders for initiating and working with the resource owners within their areas of responsibility. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Semesa Karavaki or Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu?

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply and from the outset, I would like to declare my interest as well as a member of the *i qoliqoli* owners in Tunuloa, Cakaudrove.

I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement that the MPAs have been gazetted. Can we be provided with the list of MPAs that have been gazetted, because *i qoliqoli* owners, Madam Speaker, would like to go a step further and see how best they can participate in the policing of the MPAs and how they can be empowered?

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. I would also like to highlight that Macuata, Bua and Cakaudrove are in the forefront of creating MPAs. I would provide the list of MPAs that are already gazetted for his knowledge.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Could the Honourable Minister advise this House as to what happens when the local fishermen accidentally stray into the MPAs and I believe that the normal procedure is that the equipment, boat, and even the catch are confiscated. Are these confiscated and later released to them or do they go through a process?

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

The coordination and security of MPAs are with the Ministry of Fisheries and the customary fishing right owners where the MPAs have been declared. They are patrolled and the security is within the customary fishing right owners and if there are any incidents of over-arching into the MPAs, the report is submitted to the police or the Ministry of Fisheries within that specific area and the normal legal process is then carried out.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want a clarification from the Honourable Minister where he says that MPAs are beneficial economically to the resource owners, together with the tourism operators. We have a surfing decree that says that a resource owner cannot claim payments for the enjoyment of tourists on their *i qoliqoli*. Has Government changed its policy that you can go and snorkel in the MPA and the resource owners want to get paid? Have they changed that? I am confused here, Madam Speaker, if that can be clarified, thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, it is a separate question altogether, but the law does not make any clear statement on that.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Read the law.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Jiosefa Dulakiverata.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can the Honourable Minister ....

HON. SPEAKER.- I have not called you.

(Laughter)

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply. Madam Speaker, when the customary fishing right owners declare an MPA, they fully respect the area and they do not fish from there for whatever period it is being declared for. But as had been mentioned by my colleague, there are poachers and night divers who come and fish in that area, knowing that because it is taboo, there will be a lot of fish there.

So, I ask the Honourable Minister if the law is sufficient to protect this area and to stop people from poaching into these MPAs. Thank you.



HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. At the moment, we are in the process of strengthening Fish Wardens so that they have the legal ability to be able to prosecute, as the police officers and the Fisheries Officers who can do that also.

The whole coincidence hinges on the members of the customary fishing rights owners who have sort of partnership with the fishing ventures. These are the very people who are actually going against the customary fishing rights owners, who are protecting their resources but they are actually working with the fishing ventures in poaching within the areas of MPAs.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. I just need some clarification on this issue of customary fishing rights owners in terms of equipping them with whatever it is to police these MPAs in collaboration with our Fisheries. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- I am sorry, Madam Speaker, can I ask the Honourable Member to just ask the question again?

HON. SPEAKER.- Please.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Speaker, the question is, are the customary fishing rights owners equipped with boats and engines to assist the work with the Fisheries Department in order to police these MPAs?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. The Government, through the Fisheries Department, is able to equip the traditional fishing rights owners in these areas to be able to patrol their MPAs on request from the Ministry of Fisheries.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I just want to ask the Honourable Minister, Madam Speaker, if he agrees that it is totally unfair to be denying the *qoliqoli* owners the use of their fishing areas under the certain decree.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- He said it is benefiting everyone.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Because it does not benefit them.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, that is a totally new question.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Semesa Karavaki?

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Read the law.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Honourable Minister, how do you manage the situation, given that there is a moratorium in place in an MPA and the *qoliqoli* owners want to use that part of the *qoliqoli* for certain traditional purpose? How do you manage that situation? Is there a channel that they come to you to apply for the waiving of that moratorium in order for them to fish in that area?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

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

The customary fishing rights owners who have declared the MPAs in their areas know the scheme. If they want a temporary opening of their MPA within a period of five or ten years, they can come to the Ministry of Fisheries and request that they would like to carry out a harvest within a period of time and the Ministry of Fisheries will work in coordination with them to allow that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Thank you, a supplementary question, Madam Speaker. My question is, while you are promoting the letter of the law, the spirit of the law seems to be lost because if you had the spirit of the law, the onus of the *qoliqoli* and the products around there would be more empowered, more educated to work with you. So, what is happening to the spirit of the law? You seem to be promoting the letter but not the spirit.

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I do not really know what the question is. What is the spirit of the law; I do not understand.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, just a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister. Now that MPAs are in place, can the Honourable Minister inform the House what sort of initiatives are in place to allow the traditional owners to continue their daily subsistence living and probably economical living from the MPAs that have been identified?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the question but the creation of MPAs has increased the population and the stock within the areas surrounding the MPAs. A great example is the provision of sandfish which was taken from Tailevu across to Bua, Macuata and Cakaudrove, and now they enjoy the benefit of their products in Vanua Levu. Just the production or the introduction of sandfish within their MPA has created a lot more resources around the MPAs.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, just before we carry on, I would like, at this time, to warmly welcome very prominent visitors who are here with us from the Universal Peace Federation (UPF). We have Dr. Robert Kindle, the Youth and Student for Peace Association (UPF Leader); Mr. Greg Stone, the UPF Oceania Secretary-General; and lastly, Mr. Santos Neupane who is the Director, UPF-Fiji. Welcome to Parliament.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Alvick Maharaj to ask his question.

Number of Damaged Schools  
(Question No. 115/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications inform the House as to the number of schools damaged by this current natural disaster?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for his question. Madam Speaker, a total of 19 schools were either partially damaged or destroyed in the wake of *TC Gita*, *TC Josie* and *TC Keni*. Of these schools, nine schools in the Western Division were affected by the flood and landslide and 10 schools in the Eastern Division that were affected structurally.

These schools sustained serious structural damage and required substantial reconstruction or even to the extent of actually demolishing them and putting up new structures, Madam Speaker. These works will be carried out by the Construction and Implementation Unit (CIU).

Of course, Madam Speaker, apart from these, for the information of the Honourable Members of Parliament, we have some staff quarters that were also damaged because the teachers actually live there because we need to ensure that teachers actually have accommodation.

We had some staff quarters that were damaged in Nakini Primary School in Nausori. In Ra, we had the Nalaba District School, a couple of staff quarters were also damaged there. So, overall, Madam Speaker, as I have highlighted, we had a total of 19 schools that were partially damaged and destroyed in the wake of these three cyclones. Thank you.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can the Honourable Minister assure this House that upon repair, these schools will be structurally safe and cyclone-proof and not like the building at St. John's College?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did not want to actually highlight it but I knew that the Honourable Member will try and score political points.

The St. John's College rebuild, Madam Speaker, was actually not done by us, it was done by the US Navy. As you know, there were a couple of schools that were built through international efforts. For example, the Indonesians went and rebuilt Queen Victoria School (QVS), the US Navy did the St. John's College but unfortunately, their standard was not able to withstand the wind. But as far as the ones that

our Government built or is building, Madam Speaker, they have been built to the standards as being highlighted in Parliament previously.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplementary question to the Honourable Minister; out of the 19 schools that were highlighted, how many schools that had been repaired after *TC Winston* were being damaged again, like the one in St. John's College, Cawaci?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I do not have that information here with me. Of course, that is a new question altogether but again, this is not the time for cheap political point-scoring. I hear someone having a bit of a gurgle from the other side.

Madam Speaker, the point of the matter is that, these schools actually suffered damages. If they had bothered to go down they would see the sort of emotional strain on the people in those areas. These disasters had been caused by natural phenomena, in particular if you see the flooding that took place.

As we said, most of the schools that were damaged were in the Western Division. For example, there were two schools that were affected by landslide and there were seven schools that were affected by flood. So there is no structural damage per se but they had a lot of floodwater that came in. For example, Xavier College, if you go to the Muslim schools, Votua schools were inundated in floodwaters.

In the Eastern Division, Madam Speaker, of course, this is where the last cyclone went through Kadavu, there were structural damages to 10 schools in particular and as we know that Kadavu did not necessarily bear the brunt of *TC Winston* but this time, it was in their path of the storm that came along with the cyclone so 10 schools were structurally damaged.

In respect of the Honourable Member, whether he wants to know whether those 10 schools were rebuilt after *TC Winston*, I doubt it, but I stand to be corrected and we can give them information and it will be provided by way of a written question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply. Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister is implying that locally-built structures are according to standards and they withstood the brunt of the cyclone whereas those that were built by the US Navy did not conform to the conditions and that was why they were damaged.

My question to the Honourable Minister is, if someone wants to come and build a building here, do they comply with the local standards and do they coordinate with the Local Authority to ensure that they comply with the local standards?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I did not imply anything, all I simply said was that St. John's College was actually built by the US Navy and that got damaged. Of course, there had been other structures in the past in Fiji that had been built by local contractors and had been damaged. The issue is about standards. Many houses had been built by local contractors, many schools, and they were damaged. The issue is about whether they met the standards or not.

The question that the Honourable Member asked is a very valid question in respect of, should you, for example, get aid or should you have contractors coming in from overseas, should they meet the local standards and requirements?

Yes, they should and, of course, in this particular case when we have these flurry of damage that took place after *TC Winston*, obviously at that time a lot of people wanted to come and contribute and perhaps, at that time we should have gone and said to the US Navy, "This is the structure and these are the standards that you need to adhere to", but we did not do that.

I suppose there was an assumption that since the US Navy is building it, it would be alright, and that is the lesson to learn from. In the same way, for example, in Vanuabalavu, the schools there were built by the New Zealand Government and in Koro, those were schools built by the Australian Government. We have, of course, tried to get people to build according to standards but as far as the schools that were built and are currently being built by the Government, they all have to adhere to the standards and that is the lesson we need to learn from, and to ensure that even when it comes to aid, we have someone going there and see that we must adhere to the standards.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. Given that the education of our children is very important and one of which is providing good facilities in terms of classrooms, the patrons of the 19 schools will be eager to know the timeline. Can the Government, at least, able to give us a timeline as to when these schools will be back in operation?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The timelines cannot be elucidated now because as we know in Kadavu, assessments are still being done, but there were schools that were affected by the floods, the RFMF played a very pivotal role in cleaning up the schools. For example, we visited Xavier College and where the main hall is, the gym and the music room which is below ground level were filled with water right up to the door. The Military is actually pumping water out of these classrooms and, of course, some of it may not necessarily be restored up to its full capacity. Some of the other buildings were also damaged, but they have done a fantastic job in cleaning it up.

The other schools that we visited in Ba were literally with water blasters, cleaning out all the desks, it has got mud in it. So those schools are actually open now, Madam Speaker, as announced. All those schools in the Western Divisions are now open. Some of them, of course, the buildings are good but there is very heavy level of siltation on the ground itself that needs to be cleared out. The Ministry of Health is also working in that respect.

Regarding Kadavu, of course, Madam Speaker, it would be amiss of me to actually say that it will be done in the next number of weeks because the assessment is being done. We have teams going out to see what exactly needs to be built and where the structural damages are taking place and how long it will take. But in the meantime, of course, we will ensure that classes actually get up and running. Some of the schools, for example, in Naceva District School, where the dormitory and the dining hall had been damaged, we need to make alternative arrangements. In Vunisea District School, the dormitory, the kitchen and four staff quarters had been damaged also. So these assessments are being done. We are sending out teams to see exactly what can be done and how it should be done.

HON. SPEAKER.- The last question, Honourable Salote Radrodro?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Actually, the question has been highlighted already because even after *TC Winston*, Avea District School is still not done. That is why it is important for the Honourable Minister to please, confirm to the House, when can all these schools be up and running? You have to give a specified timeframe. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it is now more than one occasion where I have highlighted to the Honourable Members about the different schools. *TC Winston* actually left a path of destruction and, of course, hundreds of schools got damaged.

I have said to them previously, Madam Speaker, I have invited them to come to the room where we had actually all the charts which shows all the schools that are being constructed, the timeframes, what percentage and I am inviting them again, please, if you want to really understand what is happening, if you want to know the timeframes, please let me know, we will take you to the situation room and show you exactly. Do not stand here and try and score cheap political points. If you are really interested, please, let us know, we will arrange a visit for them.

I have already highlighted, Madam Speaker, questions have already been asked within the past six months, in fact, just a few months ago, and I have given some timeframes on what percentage of schools will be completed by when.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to Honourable Mikaele Liawere to ask his question.

Government Plan - Kidney Transplant  
(Question No. 116/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform the House what is Government's plan for those patients who require a kidney transplant?

HON. R.S. AKBAR (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for this very important question. Madam Speaker, I am actually glad that the other side is now talking about transplant rather than harping about dialysis and I think that is the right move in the right direction.

Madam Speaker, kidney transplant is an option for chronic kidney failure and kidney patients. However, we will still talk about effective intervention to ensure that our people live a healthy lifestyle and they do not reach a stage where transplant is needed.

Transplant is very costly, Madam Speaker, but to answer the question, yes, we have a budget of \$1.3 million within the Ministry of Health and Medical Services that is used to assist those families for medical treatment that is not available locally, for treatment that cannot be delivered by visiting specialist teams and for treatment where the prognosis of living a healthy life for, at least, three to five years is possible.

Under the scheme, Madam Speaker, we have three categories:

1. people who can afford;
2. people who cannot afford; and
3. people who need partial assistance.

Initially, Madam Speaker, we provided cost for airfares. Now, we have revised the policy to assist those patients who need kidney transplant and we have three categories and they include:

1. airfares for the first one;
2. second one is airfares and treatment cost; and
3. we have full treatment cost for those Fijians who cannot provide.

It is basically worked out on a cost-sharing basis. There are those families who can afford and take their families members away. Then there are those who request the Ministry to partially fund and then there are those who cannot totally afford the treatment.

Madam Speaker, before any treatment for kidney transplant is approved, it is very important to get a compatible donor from within the family. What normally happens, Madam Speaker, a lot of families hesitate to provide their kidneys to their family members just because they think they will not be able to function on one kidney. But at the Ministry level, we try to guide and counsel families that the best compatible donor for any loved member of the family is the immediate family member.

It is important, first, to get a recommendation for a donor and again, like I said, the donor has to be a family member. Then our team works to conduct preliminary tests to find the compatibility of the donor and as a good match for a successful kidney transplant.

Madam Speaker, currently if you look at the cost of kidney dialysis provided by private facilities, we look at about \$250 per session. That makes it about \$750 per week and if you work out the cost, it comes close to \$36,000 per year.

Why I am saying transplant is a better option, Madam Speaker, with the transplant cost, normally the Ministry assists families to around \$40,000 to \$60,000. It depends on which category the family applies for assistance. So if they want total cost, that includes treatment, airfares, accommodation and food, we assess their application and provide for it. There are those who can afford but need partial, they will be paid for treatment cost and sometimes airfares. It all depends on what the application is.

We have a medical advisory committee made up of technicians and consultants, where the application goes. They assess the application, they assess the families, the need for the transplant and, of course, their affordability and then it is approved. We liaise with our recognised hospitals mostly in India, so that we can keep a track of those patients who go there, and payment is paid directly to the hospitals.

So, Madam Speaker, if I can again say that, yes, transplant is an option but the better option is for us to live a very, very healthy and a disciplined life because we all know the end stage renal failure disease, that is, kidney failure is basically caused by uncontrolled high blood pressure and high uncontrolled diabetes. This can be reversed, should we choose and decide to live a healthy life. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER. - Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD. - Thank you, Madam Speaker. Kidney Help was announced in the 2017-2018 Budget. I just want to ask the Honourable Minister, what is the progress on it, if any, and will Government consider a renal transplant facility in the country in the next Budget or is the Ministry considering that as a plan?

HON. SPEAKER. - Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. R.S. AKBAR. - Madam Speaker, I would like to, once again, thank the Honourable Member for the question, yes, very important questions.

We were allocated \$1 million to set up the National Kidney Research Centre. The plans are all in place but the land that was identified proved not very suitable, the land in Tamavua that was to be used to build this Research Centre. Unfortunately, we found that below the ground, there is sort of a cave-like structure, so we are still trying to set that up, so the plans are in progress.

On the second issue about having kidney transplant done in Fiji, Madam Speaker, yes, it would be a dream come true and I am sure it is going to come through with the public private partnership that we are working with for the new hospitals in Lautoka and Ba. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker, to the Honourable Minister, because of the high level of dialysis that is needed and some groups want to provide dialysis treatment but the cost of consumables, is there any plan for the Government to bring down the cost of consumables so that it is cheaper for groups to be able to provide dialysis treatment?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the underlying factors that we need to understand when we talk about dialysis is the fact, it can be made cheaper, but as a Government, we do not want to compromise on the quality of the consumables. We have numbers that need dialysis, like the Honourable Member said, the cost of consumables, yes it is very high because we are looking at quality consumables.

We can bring the cost down but it would be compromising the health and safety of our people. We cannot just allow any group to come in and provide that service because the quantum of care is also very important and because dialysis is ongoing. If I can urge all the Members of the House, please promote and be champions of healthy living because dialysis, diabetes and high blood pressure are all within our control and we can reverse the effects of that. Thank you.

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

HON. R.N. NADALO.- Madam Speaker, I wish to withdraw my question in today's Order Paper as the Honourable Minister had advised that he will address it in his Ministerial Statement later in the week. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Question No. 117/2018 withdrawn)

HON. SPEAKER.- We will now move on to the next item on the agenda. Written questions and I now call on the Honourable Jiosefa Dulakiverata to ask his written question.

#### Written Questions

Fijian Students on Medical Scholarship – Cuba and Romania  
(Question No. 118/2018)



HON. J. DULAKIVERATA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications inform the House, how many students from Fiji are currently on Medical Scholarship in Cuba and Romania?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will table my answer at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Orders 45 (3).

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki to ask his written question.

99-Year Leases –iTLTB and Land Bank  
(Question No. 119/2018)

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs inform the House, how many 99-year leases altogether have been granted by TLTB and the Land Bank for the last 10 years?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- (Acting Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. We will table our response at a later sitting date as provided for under the Standing Orders. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua to ask his question.

Development Works – Navua Town  
(Question No. 120/2018)

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport inform the House on the following:

- (a) Particulars of the development work in respect of the Navua Town; and
- (b) Total funds used?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- (Acting Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Minister will table an answer at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Anare Vadei to ask his written question.

Meningococcal Meningitis Disease – Number of Cases  
(Question No. 121/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform the House on the number of cases of Meningococcal Meningitis disease affected patients recorded in Fiji as at 31st March, 2018 and the breakdown of the same by district for the last 10 years?

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Question time is now over. I have been informed that there are no Ministerial Statements for today. I have also been informed that there are no Bills for Consideration. We will move on to the next Item in the Order Paper.

I now call on the Acting Prime Minister and Attorney-General to move his motion.

**REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

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

That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence review the following Treaties –

1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Acting Prime Minister, the Honourable Attorney-General has moved a motion to refer the two Treaties to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. I confirm that the Acting Prime Minister and Honourable Attorney-General has provided me with copies of the Treaties and Written Analysis as required by Standing Order 130(2).

Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 130(3), the Treaties and the Analysis are then referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence for consideration and review.

The Committee may table a report to Parliament no later than 30 days from today.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Professor Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Are we not going to have a debate on the motion?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. As has been mentioned, this motion is being referred to the Standing Committee and it is after the Standing Committee has tabled a report in Parliament then it is open for debate.

**REVIEW REPORT ON FIJI ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2015**

HON. SPEAKER.- Before I call on the Chairperson, I wish to clarify that at the end of the debate, we will be voting merely to note the report and once the vote is taken, it ends there and the report will not be debated again in Parliament.

I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs to move the motion.

HON. L. EDEN.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Report on the Fiji Electricity Authority Annual Report 2015 which was tabled on 22nd March, 2017.

HON. V. NATH.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. L. EDEN.- Madam Speaker, upon conclusion of our Committee's scrutiny of the FEA 2015 Annual Report, it was very clear that FEA was in control of the needs of the country in terms of electricity generation and transmission and that whilst doing extremely well in that respect, they also managed to record a profit of \$39.7 million after tax which was a marked improvement over the \$0.97 million turnover in 2014.

Also in 2015, Madam Speaker, FEA carried out capital expenditure works totalling around \$80.6 million. They also repaid matured bonds and loans aggregating to \$56.8 million and they funded around \$14.3 million of the Monasavu Hydro Scheme half-life repair and maintenance works.

Madam Speaker, over the past few years, FEA had added significant shareholder value and in 2015, FEA's total asset value exceeded \$1 billion. As a matter of interest, Madam Speaker, the power generation mix for 2015 was 44.9 percent hydro, 52 percent diesel and heavy fuel/oil, 0.63 percent wind and the remaining 2.47 percent, provided by independent power producers namely; Tropik Woods Industries and Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC), keeping in mind that we are referring to 2015 because things have changed since then.

As a Committee we felt that FEA was well structured to realise its function of providing clean and affordable energy solutions to Fiji with at least 90 percent of the energy requirements through renewable sources by 2025 in line with SDG 7.

Also of interest, Madam Speaker, FEA spent a total of \$28.7 million on the construction of new rural electrification schemes, grid extensions and power systems reinforcement works and of this amount, \$5 million was spent on the construction of 54 Rural Electrification Projects.

All in all, Madam Speaker, we were very pleased with the Report and commended FEA on their work based on the 2015 Annual Report. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is up for debate and I invite input, if any?

Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. My input as a consumer, as a business person and as a Parliamentarian in my area in the last four weeks, I am coming from a process point of view. I respect the fact that FEA has moved into privatising and trying to restructure to meet ...

HON. V. NATH.- Point of Order!

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. V. NATH.- Madam Speaker, we are talking about the 2015 Annual Report.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- I am speaking as a consumer.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- He is on a Point of Order, let him finish.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- We have got one, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I give you your freedom of speech.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Thank you very much.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Freedom of speech, thank you.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- I am speaking as a consumer, Madam Speaker. I live in Lami and in the last four weekends, there has been electricity breakdown for 24 hours on Saturday or Sunday. At those times, I could not even get to the internet, this is feedback from me as a member of the public and there are a lot of concerns by the members of the public.

You have great ideas and the fact that you are moving into modernisation and trying to restructure to get your money and moving into clean energy, I respect all that but for me as a consumer, I am very unhappy with the service that I am getting where I cannot even be productive as a business woman and as a Parliamentarian. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is just a very short observation on the 2015 FEA Annual Report. As outlined by the Chairperson of the Economic Affairs Committee - Honourable Lorna Eden, that FEA has a sound financial and capability background. Just adding on to that, Madam Speaker, Fiji Electricity Authority's (FEA) power distribution is largely based on hydro which is renewable and the rest comes from the fossil fuel which is the diesel generators.

Madam Speaker, although this is the 2015 Report, what is of importance is that, the reflections we get from these reports and its recommendations, one aspect that I wish to talk about is the non-commercial obligations of the FEA. As you would note, FEA has power stations in Vanua Levu, parts of Savusavu, Levuka and other islands which are diesel driven or fossil fuel driven and they often do not make money, so they run on a cross subsidy from Viti Levu Plants which is the Monasavu and Kinoya Plants. When we look at the report, very consistently you would see that on average, \$25 million to \$35 million per year is spent on non-commercial obligations which is part of the Government's initiative that FEA carries the burden.

What is worth highlighting, Madam Speaker, is that the Public Enterprises Act very clearly says that although these moneys that are expended by FEA on behalf of the Government need to be replenished, I understand that in 2002 during the Qarase-led Government, it was decided that (this is why you do not see big cheques from FEA as dividends to the Government) these are treated as a part of the Government's initiative and what I would like to highlight is that, we have these contributions going from \$25 million to \$30 million and continue to do so.

Madam Speaker, whilst doing this, part of Government's initiative is to have renewable energy (90 percent to 95 percent) by 2025. We need to invest very prudently in the renewable energy sector. To do this, FEA has come up with its capital projects. You will see in subsequent reports that FEA has over a period of time, engaged in soliciting funds through bonds, government guarantees. What is worth noting is that none of its guarantees has ever been called, so the financial structure of FEA has always been there and you will note that in 2016 after *TC Winston*, FEA was able to source funds from within to phase out the recovery programme. So, all in all, Madam Speaker, FEA is on its way to moving into renewable energy.

We would like to support FEA and once we move towards renewable energy, we should not lose sight of the fact that diesel generators and fossil fuel will continue to be part of the programme until such time we achieve 80 percent to 90 percent.

As alluded to by my colleague, the diesel generators that are in place, I believe during the last March sitting of Parliament, the Honourable Attorney-General alluded to the fact that it would cost something like \$100 million to create another line as this will address the power outages which have recently developed into something not very uncommon that we would have liked to see. But it is very common practice now that instead of turning on to the diesel generators within an hour, two hours or even six hours, it takes 24 hours.

So, this is probably one of the reasons we are trying to highlight that they will maintain the diesel generators that are in place and if need be, we need to replenish them to, at least, cater for the power demands of Fiji. Thank you.

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

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I contribute to this debate; firstly, I acknowledge the FEA for its service to the people of Fiji in terms of providing electrification and power since 1983.

My short contribution will come from the concerns of the landowners in Monasavu, who consist of more than 13 *mataqalis*. There was an out-of-court settlement of \$55 billion then, now it is 2018. What I would propose is a review because that was the settlement in terms of compensation for the loss of their land and resources for perpetuity and it is time for a review as far as the economic progress of Monasavu, and in terms of the earnings.

We note that there is about \$37.9 million profit from \$9 million in the last one and I strongly believe that the landowners must have a share of that profit because that is their contribution to the existence of FEA. It is not a one-off settlement of \$55 million, Madam Speaker, in terms of that asset which enables FEA to be there and earn \$37.9 million. Part of that profit should go to the landowners which was not factored in, in 1983 when FEA came into existence.

That is my point of view, Madam Speaker, and I hope the Government will take that up for review and for the monetary and economic benefit, of the landowners' contribution to the whole nation in terms of power and electricity in using up their resources that they could have earned also, given the fact that they were given \$55 million out-of-court settlement as a compensation properly mandated as well as the lease status being well mandated but for the benefits, they must have a share of the cake, the benefits from \$37.9 million.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Adding on to that, I wish to also add the exploitation by this Department on the rights of the indigenous people of this country in relation to Vaturu Dam.

Vaturu Dam, Madam Speaker, you have the water now being generated by the FEA to generate electricity, they have been waiting but no benefits at all go to them for the last 15 years. The Government has done each and everything to exploit them of their resource and has given nothing in return.

Compared to Monasavu where you have some kind of a royalty, this community does not have any royalty. Other than that, I wish to say that FEA has become a very big bureaucracy, and it has expanded and expanded but its services have been limited, restricted and nil to the people of this country.

The last thing that they had included now is to impose a deposit. How can you impose a deposit five or six years later? That is what this company, FEA, is doing to the poor customers.

The other point that was highlighted very specifically in the 2015 Auditor-General's Report is the hefty sum being used by FEA in relation to its properties, and this is what the Auditor-General found out, "Property, plant and equipment from the base component of the Authority in the sum of \$1 billion but never once did FEA account for that", so the Auditor's Report noted, "Our review of the Authority's fixed assets indicated that physical verification of all property, plant and equipment was not carried out." So, how should we, the taxpayers, be mistreated by this company?

It is a big amount. What happened was that, there was an agreement in 2015 for FEA to account back to the Auditor-General of all the lease of its asset but in 2016, it never did that. So, here we have the company that is generating electricity that is a monopoly, which is not doing its work. The right thing to do, and I sincerely recommend, is that we remove this monopoly. We should create competition so that the consumers can benefit.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to make a brief contribution and it is in relation to Recommendations (e) in terms of Wind, Waves and Geothermal Energy.

I make this presentation in regards to the effect of intermittent power supply in regards to service delivery and how it adversely affects the people. For example, Madam Speaker, in Nabouwalu, Bua they used to have wind energy and this was done by previous Governments, but during my recent visit there, this is not working anymore.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- No more, finish.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Even though wind energy supply has not been working, there has been no alternative in place, apart from the diesel-generated energy. They are talking about solar because the recommendation is saying that, "The Committee notes that the work being carried out in these areas which today are perceived to be uneconomical ...." If it is uneconomical, then the Government should put in place an alternative, for example, solar.

In regards to the intermittent supply, it adversely affects the service delivery to the people. Take for example, the power supply at the Nabouwalu Hospital (and I am not even sure whether the Minister responsible knows about this or not) and this has been in place for a long time. The power gets cut off from 12.00 midday to 2.00 o'clock in the afternoon.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- I was just there recently during Easter from 12 o'clock (noon) to 2 o'clock (p.m.) and it comes on again in the afternoon until 11.00 p.m. and this affects service delivery in terms of health services because people come in according to bus schedules and they come early in the morning. This is the time that they get to see the doctors but then everything shuts down because there is no electricity.

The Dental Team cannot work because there is no electricity and even the people who do administration duties and want to come in in terms of checking out their cards, everything comes to a stop. Even if you go to all the Civil Service ministries and departments there, everything comes to a stop from 12.00 p.m. because there is no power supply. This affects the people who are the recipients of their service delivery because they do not align this to the transportation that is available, so they come in, and from that time they either sit there and wait throughout and then look for a place to sleep because they would have missed their bus or they go back home.

That is exactly why, Madam Speaker, I am asking that the Government should seriously and quickly look at this. If there is no wind energy then why not solar? If not, then you extend your service during the day and maybe you can just leave it open from about 4.00 a.m. and let it go on to 11.00 p.m. rather than cutting out that crucial time from 12.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m. which definitely affects service delivery to the people in that area in Nabouwalu, Bua.

Madam Speaker, this is not only in the Bua Province but also in other areas where there are no continuous electricity supply and they have this intermittent supply which affects the service delivery in regards to how the people are being serviced by the Government agencies. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to contribute to the debate on the FEA Annual Report but at the outset, let me just touch a bit on that delivery that my colleague has been highlighting. She was referring to her part of Fiji and, Madam Speaker, did you see a photograph on Saturday about the Hibiscus Highway that was opened with so much of a fanfare?

I think the whole FijiFirst people were there when they opened that a year or two years ago, it is breaking up, Madam Speaker. So delivery of service is a huge issue with this Government and they are re-inventing the wheels, they are not going according to what has been tested over all the years, but I think in a slipshod manner. I just thought I would add to what my colleague was sharing there, Madam Speaker.

On the FEA, Madam Speaker, there is something here on the Power Development Programme and the focus is to be in accordance with SDG, that it should be about 90 percent renewable by 2035. Madam Speaker, my colleague has spoken about Monasavu and I think the formula to this is to encourage more resource owners to come into renewable energy.

We already have a model, the one in Nadroga with the Nabou Green Energy where 25 percent of the ownership of the business belongs to Tropik Woods which I challenge in this House because that should have gone to the landowners who provided 5,000 acres for the cultivation of the field to activate that energy setup.

What you have today is down the line, we still have three run on river hydro planned for Namosi, there is another similar scheme as the one in Nadroga earmarked for Sabeto but the way forward, Madam Speaker, is to isolate these establishments. They are known as Independent Power Producers (IPPs). We privatise them and get the resource owners to buy shares into it, in the same way that is happening now in Nadroga; 25 percent owned by the shareholder other than the Korean conglomerate. We can resolve the issue with Monasavu in this.

Madam Speaker, Monasavu is a sad story. I come from the coastal area of Nadroga, I did not know that that settlement that was given to them was not what it was perceived to be. I thought that with the \$55 million, they would be living in luxury up in the highlands, but when I spoke to them they said,

“Bill, come and see how we live.” It is not consistent with what they are providing for this country, what they have given away in terms of their land. Thousands and thousands of acres of land is helping to produce electricity but \$55 million of 99 years, 12 *mataqali*, it comes to about \$46,000 a year.

I agree with my colleague Honourable Karavaki that we should review this, but going further to that, as a moral going forward, we must isolate all these Monasavu, Nadarivatu, wherever one is going to set up and help the resource owners buy into it to become IPPs. FEA is to focus only on transmission, generation comes from the IPPs, sell to the national grid - FEA to distribute. I believe, Madam Speaker that is the best way forward because we know that the people of Monasavu have indicated an interest to buy shares in FEA but they were told that they cannot. This should be a way out of this, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, one of the recommendations in the Report is to continue to explore possibilities in wind, waves and other thermal solutions. When it comes to waves, Madam Speaker, this I brought with the Presidency of COP 23. I said that when I was in Nova Scotia in Canada there is a huge project happening in there with the Canadian engineers, French engineers and German engineers to harvest the waves on that part of Canada and the power from that wave could provide energy for the whole of North America.

What is important to us being island nations, Madam Speaker, the President of COP 23 is to tap into this, talk to the French engineers, the German engineers, we are COP 23 President and say, “Look, how can we piggy-back on this and have our university be part of the research.” Because when I was there, Madam Speaker, the first trial, the waves came in and whatever they put up collapsed and they were happy. They said, “This tells us the energy here is indeed great to produce what we expect.” So being who we are in COP 23 and Climate Change, let us use these opportunities to link into what is happening worldwide and help provide renewable energy for us here in Fiji.

That, Madam Speaker, is my contribution. I must say that I am happy with FEA after *TC Winston*, they did a marvellous job. There are certain parts of Fiji that still needs to be improved, but overall we have an agency that given the time is doing a good job.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I would just like to make a few comments and I just thank the Committee for its Report. And Madam Speaker, rightfully so, the Committee has focussed a lot on the aspects of generation of electricity and seeking alternative sources of generation about renewable energy and the types of renewable energy that is available.

Some of the renewable energy sources, Madam Speaker, are actually expensive to implement, as we know. Some of them are actually in the development stage, as just been highlighted and some, of course, the technologies has moved on quite significantly in the past few years. For example, the production of solar energy a few years ago, the technology was quite archaic. Today, it has moved in leaps and bounds and today, you can actually get storage through solar, before you could not get storage on solar.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, in areas of cogeneration and solar generation, a lot has been changed. In that respect, Madam Speaker, I think the Honourable Member who just spoke should also recognise the fact as has been the highlighted by the Honourable Prime Minister in this Parliament and other Honourable Members of Parliament also and as has been said outside Parliament, in respect of Fiji’s presidency of COP 23, a number of initiatives are on foot and a number of agencies are actually working with the Fijian Government.



We are most definitely doing that, we have been talking about that on a number of occasions and the Honourable Prime Minister has said that also. For example, Fiji has joined the Solar Alliance that was started by India. Recently, the Honourable Prime Minister was there and the technology in India has actually moved quite significantly where they can actually provide a lot of energy through very small panels. This is why we actually go out to the international community and join these alliances.

The Honourable Prime Minister is there. Of course, a couple of weeks ago, Honourable Members on the other side were highlighting that he was not in Fiji when in fact, he was here, Madam Speaker, and if they can say that, in fact, he is at the moment in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Also, Madam Speaker, he is speaking at various engagements where specifically areas of climate change are being addressed; it has been addressed through the CHOGM Forum too.

Madam Speaker, the reality is, as has been highlighted again by the other side, that you have three businesses related to electricity. One is, of course, the generation and the other distribution and then the retailing arm of it. All of them, of course, have their own different specific challenges and indeed as specific business models.

In Fiji, Madam Speaker, unlike other countries, we have not broken it up and indeed, there was a move during the *Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT) Government days to create three separate companies and all of them run independently, similarly as they did with Airports Fiji Limited (AFL) where they actually hived-off the Air Traffic Management, then we had the other aspects of AFL. Today, of course, we work as a conglomerate. Similarly we need to do that with the FEA because we did not have the economies of scale.

Some Honourable Member from the other side, Honourable Nawaikula, talked about getting rid of the monopoly with FEA, Madam Speaker. The reality is that, the market is limited. Anyone who understands finance will demonstrate and show you that the economies of scale do not exist. We do not have millions and millions of people. We do not have millions and millions of acres of land that can actually be used for these types of purposes to indeed, generate electricity.

As has been seen in other countries, Madam Speaker, in particular if you talk about, for example, solar energy on a wide scale to be able to provide to the national grid as opposed to the supply into your home, you literally need hundreds of thousands of acres of flat land where you actually can put the solar panels to be able to generate electricity. So it is not an easy thing to simply say, “Let us have solar energy.”

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is, as has been highlighted by the Honourable Prem Singh and I am glad he actually raised this, back round about 2002, the then Government actually said that the non-commercial obligation should be borne by the entity itself. Thereby, it had, in fact, a negative impact on the balance sheet because really, if non-commercial obligations were what it means that it is not commercially viable for them to do so, if someone else paid for it, for example, Government, it would then be reflected in the balance sheet of that particular entity.

Now what has happened since then, Madam Speaker, is that we have reviewed the tariff rates. The thinking previously was that everyone in Fiji must pay a flat rate, 24 cents per unit at one point in time to make electricity affordable. But as we know, Madam Speaker, everyone has different income levels so a person who is also quite wealthy was paying 24 cents a unit cost of electricity and the person who has actually low income was also paying the same rate. Today, Madam Speaker, with the structure that we have got, the basic cost is about 34 cents a unit. Now, if you use more electricity, for example, if a home with a swimming pool and 10 air conditioners, then obviously your rate should be higher because you are using more. Your footprint is much bigger.

What we have done, Madam Speaker, and this is what they talk about handouts, it is not about a handout. We said that those people below a particular income level, we will actually subsidise the cost for them to effectively pay 50 percent. So FEA, in fact, does not lose out. We pay directly to FEA and say, “Look, this is 50 percent cost, the 77 cents you will be paying for the 34 cents.” They pay half of it. That is what we call targeting assistance.

In that way, Madam Speaker, your assistance is actually targeted to those who need it but without the actual entity losing out because the reality is that, the balance sheet of FEA must be strong. If the balance sheet of FEA is strong, it can get better interest rates when it actually goes out to borrow money. If the balance sheet is strong, then FEA does not have to rely on Government guarantees. This has actually been the same of most State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

As highlighted in Parliament a few months back, Madam Speaker, today FEA where about in access of \$200 million, that is no longer guaranteed by Government alone, so we need not just FEA but other SOEs to move in that direction. For example, AFL has borrowing in excess of \$100 million without Government guarantee because its balance sheet is strong. So it can go out into the market, go to a financial institution and say, “Look, we have the capacity to be able to repay the loan, you do not need Government to back us up.” That is the approach we need to take with all our SOEs. Some of it needs restructuring, some of it requires, of course, some divestment of shares. We are not privatising; we are actually partially divesting our shares. We have repeatedly said that Government will continue to hold on to 51 percent of the shares in FEA. This is critical utility that is critical for our nation and we need to be able to hold on to the critical utilities which initially was held by the nation itself.

Madam Speaker, we need to move away from that old way of thinking where flat rate applies to everyone. We today have now hacked-ins, Madam Speaker, that are now paying in excess of 40 cents because they are actually making money from that. They are making a huge profit from that. That is why they need to pay a higher rate.

Similarly with water, we had companies that used to take water from the tap, iodised the water, make bottled water and sell it to people but pay very low rates. Now they, of course, have to pay a higher rate because it is a commercial enterprise for them. Our focus obviously is to ensure that the average Fijian is able to afford water or electricity to targeted assistance.

Madam Speaker, the renewable energy, of course, is the way to go. As we know because it reduces our vulnerabilities on dependency on fossil fuel because when the price of fossil fuel goes up, as we know that certain things are happening in Syria, it will now have an impact on the price of world market price of crude oil. These are the factors that are completely beyond our control.

If we depend on fossil fuel which is actually free when you think about it, then our vulnerability is reduced. Somosomo Hydro Scheme, for example, did not exist a few years ago. So what Honourable Prem Singh was talking about that the renewable energy is actually limited because Monasavu is here, Madam Speaker, the point is that you can have what we call “stand alone renewable generation points”. In fact, that is the way to go. So we are currently working with one of the agencies, we are using Taveuni and Ovalau as the pilot project to make these two islands completely renewable energy supplied electricity. Renewable energy fuel, giving one hundred percent renewable energy electricity. These are the two pilot projects we are working with a couple of international agencies as has been announced also, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, as has been highlighted, one of the reasons why the profits have increased for FEA is because of the tariff restructures that have taken place which has allowed FEA to do better pricing.

Madam Speaker, in respect of one clarification on what Honourable Gavoka said that we have said landowners cannot buy shares, that is not true. We never said that. We said that eventually we will want to list the shares on the stock market. When you list shares on the stock market, unlike Fijian Holdings, anyone can go and buy the shares. Of course, Fijian Holdings has restricted share trading. All the other companies that are listed on the South Pacific Stock Exchange, anyone can go and buy shares, including landowners.

Just a point of clarification, there are three sources of revenue for landowners in respect of the Monasavu Dam, Madam Speaker. One, of course, as has been highlighted was the compensation. They seem to forget, Madam Speaker, that the Monasavu Dam when the leases, I should say, was negotiated, it was done during the Alliance Government days and subsequently during the Rabuka-led Government, then you had the Qarase-led Government. It was during that time that the landowners for after a couple of decades feeling aggrieved and rightfully so in one particular instance, when FEA was given access to a particular part of their land without compensation that \$50-odd million was given as compensation to them through the court system.

Now, some may argue that the deeds of their God has not necessarily been good and we have had landowners who have come and see us too, Madam Speaker. Unfortunately, at the moment, Madam Speaker, there are about 12 to 13 landowning units. They do not necessarily have a uniform approach as to how they want to go forward and that is an issue. We have actually discussed it with them and we told them that. So they are getting compensations through that.

The other one, Madam Speaker, of course is the lease payment for their land. The lease payment for the land has been leased, in fact, the rental has gone up for that and recently it has almost gone in excess of double, Madam Speaker, and I stand to be corrected on the exact figures, but I have got the figures from the FEA, not here with me but in my office.

The third payment that the landowners get is a royalty on the amount of electricity that is generated from the plant. So they get a royalty on the amount. So if the generation increases, they get a higher royalty that is being paid out, Madam Speaker, so that is the current situation. And as has been highlighted earlier on, many of these landowners never had electricity themselves, they only saw the wires going over their villages, today many of them actually have electricity and, of course, it was first stated by the Bainimarama-led Government and, of course, the FijiFirst Government.

In respect of, Madam Speaker, about the COP 23, of course, I have highlighted that. Honourable Nawaikula had raised this issue about Vaturu Dam. He is right that the water that has been used from Vaturu Dam is actually being used as electricity but they get the water from Water Authority of Fiji. We have been informed, in fact I just checked with the CEO of FEA for the past year and a half, they are not doing so because apparently there was something wrong with the system.

The way the system works is Vaturu Dam, the water is used for drinking purposes, the water comes from Vaturu Dam, and it is Water Authority of Fiji who is paying compensation to the people of Vaturu Dam who own that area specifically. Before the water hits the reservoir or Water Authority of Fiji they then try and churn electricity from there. Of course, that is something that they need to look at and this started around about 2006, I am told, but it is not being functioning for the past year and a half.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee once again for their work but also Madam Speaker, to highlight and thank them for their recommendation in respect of the focus on renewable energy. We have given an undertaking under our commitments, under the NDC that we will reduce our overall carbon footprint by 30 percent. Of course, the generation of electricity through renewable sources will be a major factor in helping us achieve the target, but also to be able to target the transportation sector where there is a large amount of carbon footprint and where there are buses, where

there are motor vehicles, cars, trucks and of course throughout boats, vessels and inter island shipping that takes place.

Madam Speaker, again I would like to commend the Board of FEA and the hard working team. It is interesting to note after we had the cyclone here, Auckland was actually hit by a storm. Parts of Auckland, Madam Speaker, did not have electricity for four or five days in the suburbs of Auckland, Madam Speaker. I understand around Papatoetoe and all those places.

The reality, Madam Speaker, is this, there will be electricity cables that will go down when we have a cyclone. The point is, Honourable Prem Singh highlighted that we need to be able to ensure that we have back-up systems to be able to get the electricity back-up and running. As we all know and we all acknowledge that electricity is now become a major component and part and parcel of our lives, it not only affects our ability to see things at night but also to run our factories, to be able to access internet, access to our mobile phones. I was up in the Valley Road last week, parts of Bilolevu, et cetera, there was no phone connection because the transmitter was actually supplied electricity by FEA. One of the other mobile phone companies of course had the back-up generator on their site and you could access the other mobile phone company's mobile connectivity.

But the reality, Madam Speaker, is that you have advanced countries, even New Zealand, that was out of electricity for four days. I am not saying that therefore that should be the benchmark but I think we need to be able to ensure that we acknowledge the fact that these things do take place. This is why, Madam Speaker, for example, the four-lane road that you have in front of Nadi Airport and all the way from Namaka and Martintar, you will see no overhead cables, they all have been put under ground and that is what we want to do because when you put cables underground there is nothing to blow down and we would like to see that most our trunk routes, Madam Speaker....

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Earthquakes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, acts of God cannot always be anticipated. We can have an earthquake, absolutely....

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Absolutely, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Member is talking about earthquake. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we do not have earthquake proof cables but the reality is, we have a frequency of cyclones in Fiji. So, you have a frequency of a particular climatic event then you try and build resilience against that and the way to do that in the Pacific at this point in time is to be able to have underground cables.

Underground cabling, Madam Speaker, costs far more money but we will need to be able to do that. Honourable Prem Singh talked about the redundancy line. At the moment we have only one line that runs from Monasavu connects to Vuda and down here. So if one of the lines get actually hit by lightning then of course it goes down. We need to build redundancy, it costs an excess of \$100 million but we will need to do that in order for us to be able to have that capacity to be able to meet the challenges of climatic events.

Once again, I would like to thank the Board. The Board, Madam Speaker, as you know, made announcements about the divestment of shares and we will also be giving out shares to all account holders and there will be some announcements made about that this week, Madam Speaker, the roll out of the corporatisation of FEA. I would like to thank once again in particular the hardworking men and women of FEA who, in the past few days, have been actually out in the field with their sub-contractors putting up electricity cables so that ordinary Fijians can access electricity. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to raise a number of issues as part of the contribution to the debate. If you look at the list of recommendations, the Committee actually points out that FEA is well structured to provide 90 percent of renewable energy by 2025.

Madam Speaker, I am not sure whether that is a realistic plan and whether FEA is or will be on target to achieve that. If you look at the list of renewable energy sources, of course you have hydro, biomass, cogeneration, solar and wind waves and geothermal.

Madam Speaker, I want to in particular talk about cogeneration because this is one of the issues that this Government and the former CEO of FSC basically talked about how cogeneration was going to turn around FSC, how it was going to contribute to renewable energy, power generation by FEA and how it was going to make FEA more financially viable. Madam Speaker, I know that the Committee talks about the constraints with the Tropik Woods but I am not sure since this report and since the Committee actually looked at the Tropik Woods Drasa Plant, whether that has already been enabled and whether that has been working.

The Committee also notes the challenges faced by the FSC in its cogeneration initiative and the fact that FSC Labasa was able to supply power to FEA only during the crushing period, whether that scenario has changed, we have not been told, Madam Speaker.

However, more importantly, Madam Speaker, if you look at the report that the Committee provided and the presentation from FSC, they actually talked about the commission of Rarawai Cogeneration Plant, phase 1 by January 2019. Now, we have not heard much since the last CEO of FSC left the job and the fact that the FSC, Madam Speaker, made that very fundamental point with respect to making FSC vital, which is almost insolvent or is already insolvent. We are not sure whether the progress on this matter has been satisfactory.

We were told that the milestone achieved in the Rarawai Cogeneration Project, it said that the feasibility study was completed, a detailed project report prepared and detailed engineering was completed, and that the government of India had granted US\$70 million line of credit for the implementation of the project, power purchase agreement finalised with FEA, et cetera.

So, I think while the Committee rightfully talks about renewable energy and I think we all support the idea that we should move away from fossil fuels, we should move more towards renewable energy. I am not sure, Madam Speaker, given that we have not heard any more on cogeneration in particular, especially the Rarawai Cogeneration and whether the plan by the FEA or FSC to have it commissioned by 1st January is on target.

Madam Speaker, it is all right to have good plans. I think plans are necessary and important but we also must have a realistic timeframe. We must have a realistic view and assessment of our plans and whether what we say in our reports to the people, what we say in Parliament with the respect to what we want to do is actually achieved at the end of the day. So, I have a lot of questions with respect to the target of achieving 90 percent of renewable energy by 2025 given that some of the components of renewable energy generation is already facing a lot of difficulties and there is no clear indication of the progress made in those different areas. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other input to this debate, I now ask the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs to speak in reply

HON. L. EDEN.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in response to some of the negative comments that were made about the reliability of the power

HON. MEMBER.- (Inaudible interjection)

HON. L. EDEN.- They were negative.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to point out some facts regarding power system reliability of FEA.

Madam Speaker, there are internationally accepted performance indicators used each year to measure FEAs power system reliability. The average total length of time that a customer is without power over a year is measured by the System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI) against the target of maximum 700 minutes. FEA in 2015 achieved the SAIDI of 412 minutes. The average number of times that a customer's power supply is interrupted in a year is measured by a System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI) against the target of 15 times. In 2015, FEA achieved a SAIFI of five times.

Madam Speaker, there are many reasons for power interruptions and some of them that occurred in 2015 included heavy rain, lightning and storms, faults on power line hardware, overgrown vegetation or trees clashing with power lines, motor vehicles colliding with power poles, bush fires and vandalism on FEA overhead power networks.

Now keeping in mind, Madam Speaker, that a lot of the equipment that FEA has in service has been there for more than 30 years and they urgently require upgrading and refurbishment.

FEA has incorporated these upgrades and repair works in its development plan.

Initiatives that FEA had in place since 2015 included:

1. Live line maintenance of its parallel lines at all voltage levels;
2. Effective vegetation management programmes;
3. Use of appropriate technology to detect defects that can be fixed on time and equipment that can assist in restoring power supply quickly; and
4. Ensuring that adequate supply capacity is available to meet the demand for electricity at all times and of course an ongoing programme to replace aging assets.

So, I think all in all, Madam Speaker, my Committee had agreed on, when we finished our scrutinizing of this Report, we were very happy with FEA's 2015 Annual Report.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote to note the content of the Report. Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of "Noes")

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

Motion agreed to.

Honourable Members, we have completed all the Items in today's Order Paper. Therefore, Parliament will now adjourn until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.34 p.m.