

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**



## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

### **DAILY HANSARD**

**TUESDAY, 17TH APRIL, 2018**

**[CORRECTED COPY]**

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## **TUESDAY, 17TH APRIL, 2018**

The Parliament resumed at 9.34 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

### **PRESENT**

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable J.V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs; the Honourable Lt. Col. I.B. Seruiratu, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management and Meteorological Services; Honourable Ratu I. Kubuabola, Minister for National Security and Defence; the Honourable F.S. Koya, Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism and Lands and Mineral Resources; the Honourable I. Delana, Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports; the Honourable V.K. Bhatnagar, Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; the Honourable V. Pillay, Assistant Minister for Agriculture; and the Honourable A.M. Radrodoro.

### **MINUTES**

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

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

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

#### Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to today's sitting of Parliament. I also welcome the members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching proceedings on television and the internet and listening to the radio.

I also especially welcome another group of the USP PL100 students - welcome to your Parliament. I hope that you will enjoy today's proceedings. For the information of Honourable Members, we will be seeing more students visiting in the course of this week.

#### Reminder – Chairpersons of Standing Committees

At this juncture, may I remind all the Chairpersons of the six Standing Committees to make every effort to table all their reports pertaining to Bills, Annual Reports, Petitions and others that had been referred to their respective Committees.

Ministries' Adherence to Recommendations in Standing Committee Reports

I would also like to thank the Ministries that have heeded Standing Order 121(6) and have subsequently responded to the recommendations in the Standing Committee Reports that were referred to them. Additionally, may I remind those Ministries that have yet to submit their responses to do so, as we are coming close to the end of the term of this Parliament.

Thank you, Honourable Members.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS**

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Acting Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources to table his Reports.

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

1. Consumer Council of Fiji January–July 2016 Report;
2. Investment Fiji Annual Report 2015;
3. Investment Fiji Annual Report Financial Year 2016;
4. Fiji Commerce Commission Annual Report 2014; and
5. Fiji Commerce Commission 2015 Annual Report.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Consumer Council of Fiji January–July 2016 Report to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the following Reports to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs:

1. Investment Fiji Annual Report 2015;
2. Investment Fiji Annual Report Financial Year 2016;
3. Fiji Commerce Commission Annual Report 2014; and
4. Fiji Commerce Commission 2015 Annual Report.

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

**QUESTIONS**

Oral Questions

Update/Status of Meningococcal C Outbreak  
(Question No. 122/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services update the House on the current national status of Fiji Meningococcal C Outbreak and whether the 38 reported cases from 1st January to 5th April, 2018 has increased or decreased?

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

Madam Speaker, for the information of the House, there is a Ministerial Statement that will be presented by me later on which includes detailed information regarding this topic today.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question would be a question on what has been presented, but there has been no presentation.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I rise on a point of order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of order.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Standing Orders 60, 44 and 46, can all apply in this one, Madam Speaker. We are talking about the consultation for the 2017-2018 Budget, and the financial year will be ending in a little over two months. Why is this question being brought up? If it is wrong, then Standing Order 44(5) says that the Member must ensure the statement is correct. So, it is about 2018-2019, then it must be struck out.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The question has been approved by the Business Committee.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- But the statement must be correct, Standing Order 44(5).

Are we talking about 2017-2018 or 2018-2019?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is wrong.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- It is wrong. What is the point of discussing a Budget that will be finished in about two months' time.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Consultation.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Relevancy is also an issue here, Madam Speaker. Relevancy, and not wasting the time of Parliament.

(Honourable A. Sayed-Khaiyum interjects)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Well, he should ensure that it is correct under Standing Order 44(5).

HON. SPEAKER.- This question has been closely scrutinised by the Business Committee and has been approved to be asked today. Therefore, we will continue and the Honourable Alvick Maharaj will have the floor.

Outcome of the 2017-2018 Budget Public Consultations  
(Question No. 123/2018)

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 on how the Public Consultations for the 2017-2018 Budget was received?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Madam Speaker, I think the Opposition are feeling a bit hot under the collar for nothing.

Madam Speaker, it is not about the budget per se, it is about consultation process itself.. We can, of course, also mention about the consultations that had taken place for the 2018-2019 Budget which I intended to address in any case.

Madam Speaker, in respect of the 2017-2018 Budget consultations, we had about 32 official consultations and they went really well. Essentially, two consultations were held at the disabled persons organisation in Suva and Lautoka, and 11 were held with the general public, covering most parts of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. There were 11 consultations held with 145 secondary schools – 16 in the Central Division, 52 in the Western Division, 33 in the Northern Division, with more than over 1,700 students altogether.

We also went out to all the university campuses – the University of the South Pacific (USP) Campus in Laucala Bay, Fiji National University (FNU) in Nasinu and Samabula, the University of Fiji in Saweni and also FNU Campus in Lautoka. We also had three private sector organisation consultations, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the consultation is similar to the 2018-2019 Budget consultations and the consultations which we commenced, Madam Speaker, unfortunately we had to postpone them because of the climatic events that we had. But the consultations follow a similar vein in respect of reaching out to as wide members of the Fijian population as possible.

However, what is really interesting, Madam Speaker, is that in the 2017-2018 Budget consultations, a number of the submissions that were actually made by, in particular the students were taken on board and indeed, were encapsulated in the 2017-2018 Budget, which the Opposition had highlighted, is about to finish on 31st July, 2018.

But I think it is very important to note, Madam Speaker, that the direct submissions by members of the public actually had been incorporated into the Budget itself and we expect similar types of consultative processes so that we will have an input into the 2018-2019 Budget provisions. As we have already said in the Business Committee meeting that the Budget will be delivered on 22nd June, 2018 and I know it is already out there. So, as we said that we will present the Budget on the evening of 22nd June of this year.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question. Honourable Vunivalu.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- What is the response from the youth and young Fijians, especially students being involved in budget consultations?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Should be “what was” and not “what is”.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the consultation process is actually very, very interesting because it does give us an opportunity to present to, in particular, our youth the state of the economy, about things like what are the implications of a healthy foreign reserves or non-healthy foreign reserves, what does economic growth have with the impact it has on employment and unemployment and indeed, which other sectors that actually contribute to the economic growth. For example, as has been seen in the consultations, there is room for improvement in the agricultural, fisheries and forestry sector but there are other areas that, of course, are doing well, for example, in manufacturing, construction and the financial services area.

It does give also the students the opportunity to know where perhaps potential jobs are, perhaps areas in which specific career paths can be pursued. But it does give them a direct opportunity to be able to make submissions to us and for them to be able to know as opposed to simply relying on chit chat on social media but hear directly on the facts and what are the implications of the various economic determinants within the country itself and the economy and what impact it has on them directly in respect of their future. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Before I call on the next supplementary question, please be informed that Members of the Opposition had agreed to these questions as is, both from SODELPA and NFP. We do not want to hear anymore comments on the text of the question itself.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, the consultation to school children clearly is a vote buying exercise, especially when the Honourable Minister attends. True, it will be good but limit it to the teachers and the Permanent Secretary. So could he inform the House why can you not limit the consultation and give it to the teachers and the Permanent Secretary instead of the Honourable Minister going directly?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Nawaikula's statement encapsulates precisely the thinking of the Opposition. They do not respect our youth, they do not understand where youth are coming from, they do not see our youth as the immediate future leaders of this country.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That, Madam Speaker, encapsulates precisely where the Opposition sees youth and the reason why we consult the youth because they need to be empowered. They need to be empowered with knowledge, they need to be able to be empowered to know that they are part of the democratic process. They talk about democracy all the time, not knowing what it means, this is part and parcel of a democratic process where you empower all members of our society. This age old thinking in Fiji that only the elderly people should be making the decisions should be swept away.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We believe that our youth should be making the decisions.

Madam Speaker, 70 percent of the entire Fijian population today is below the age of 40, 50 percent is below the age of 27; how dare they come into this Parliament and say that our youth should not be empowered. Our youth need to be empowered, Madam Speaker, it is precisely what this side of the Government intends to do.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the youth of this country understand where the Opposition is coming from.

Madam Speaker, one of the important questions, in fact, the youth raised a lot important questions and one of the questions they raised was about the relativity of the salaries of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers.

(Honourable Government Members interject)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I would like the Honourable Attorney-General to inform this House as to what was his response. I think he talked about Singapore, he talked about corruption, whether he agrees with the students that the salary that the Prime Minister and the allowances that the Cabinet Ministers are getting is probably not relative to what we should have in this country?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it is obviously (I have forgotten the word), because of the lack of credibility of the actual question and it is completely inappropriate to the substantive question. Madam Speaker, what he is talking about, he was not present in any of the consultations and no one in the consultations we have had, had raised that. This is cheap political point-scoring, that is what it is, all the time.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I recall consultation, I believe it was rural secondary schools in Naitasiri and I believe that issue is on behalf of all rural schools. The students raised the issue on having computers in their schools and before they can have computers, they have to have electricity supply.

In my recent visit to Solevu Junior Secondary School and also in Adi Maopa Secondary School, they do not have any electricity supply and the computers were well beyond their years of use. So, how does the Honourable Minister include these things in the next coming Budget? Will they be there, because they did not appear in this present Budget?

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member has served as a civil servant, I understand, for a number of years and she knows that it is not prudent to actually divulge what is going to be in the Budget. She is asking what is going to be in the Budget, how preposterous a suggestion is that?

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is, of course, there are areas in Fiji that do not have electricity, we all know that. Of course, Madam Speaker, there are schools because of the lack of electricity, do not actually have computers. So, this is why, as we have said on a number of occasions, we have unprecedented infrastructure development in Fiji.

HON. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Unprecedented levels of rural electrification, Madam Speaker, and as a result of that, we will continuously then empower people to be more access to electricity, therefore, devices and computers, et cetera, can be made available to them.



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

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. Could the Honourable Minister inform this House that during consultations with the school students, why were teachers left out during question time?

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, it is a very important point, actually, I forgot about that.

Madam Speaker, when we go out to consult university students and high school students, we want them to be able to feel free to be able to express their views, and that is precisely the point. In fact, we have asked them. At one of the universities at the Laucala Campus, the lecturers stayed on, and guess what happened? The first few questions were asked by the lecturers.

At FNU Campus in Samabula, they wanted the lecturers out, in fact the VC said, "Do you want us to stay" and I asked them, they said, "no, we do not want them." They said that they did not want the lecturers to stay because some of the complaints and issues they raised are precisely about the lecturers themselves and the lack of facilities at those various Campuses. And, Madam Speaker, we went to Vashist Muni School in Navua where we asked them, "do you want the teachers to stay"; a resounding no. We asked the teachers to leave because these people then felt free, without the teachers there, they could express themselves.

Madam Speaker, the teachers, of course, and the other lecturers, et cetera, had the opportunity to go to the public consultations, had the opportunity to go to the private sector consultations because anyone would know, given the history of our educational system in Fiji, when you have teachers and lecturers around, the students feel a bit impeded. There is a bit of impediment that they cannot speak freely. I mean, a students at FNU Campus in Samabula would not feel free to complain about their lecture theatres when the lecturers are there themselves. We had complaints about the calibre of some of the lecturers. They would not have been able to feel free to have those comments made whilst they are there, so that is precisely the freedom for them to be able to express themselves and that is why they are not there.

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

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

Madam Speaker, in the consultation, we hear Government saying eight years of unprecedented economic growth (GDP). Have the students been allowed to express how their parents are faring in Fiji to make ends meet under the so-called period of unprecedented economic growth? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I think the Honourable Members are kind of stifled by the fact that we have this consultation when we came up with this idea. Madam Speaker, in this consultation process, any student can ask any question, any student can raise any issues, there is absolutely no restriction. He is asking one question which he has politically twisted himself, but that is fine. So, even if he went to one of those consultations or sent a student and say, "Go and ask that question", they can ask that. We have had questions like that, numerous questions that they may feel uncomfortable about.

However, I just want to address the Honourable Semesa Karavaki, he said the lecture halls and the quality of lecturers has got nothing to do with the Budget consultation, of course, it has. FNU is

entirely funded by the Fijian Government - \$56 million. The University's Vice Chancellor and the Council came and consulted us, Madam Speaker, and asked for the expenses or where the finances should be directed. In fact in this year's Budget (2017-2018 Budget), we increased their Operational Funding so they could pay higher salaries to attract better lecturers because USP as everyone knows, pays not higher than FNU does for lecturers and tutors. It is the fact.

So, in order to create that learning environment where students actually feel comfortable and feel confident in the system, we actually provided that additional funding, so it is directly related to the Budget because FNU is directly funded, Madam Speaker, by the Fijian Government.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The last question, Honourable Josefa Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question; I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply. My question is, why does the Government have to go to schools during school hours to do these consultations? Why do you not call for a neutral venue and see how many people attend your consultations?

HON. SPEAKER.- Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, we do not go to each and every single school, we actually do it in districts. For example, the schools are invited, but some schools do not attend and some schools do attend.

At Vashist Muni College, we had a lot of the schools in the Namosi/Serua area that came. Last year we had 16 schools in the Central Division that attended Suva Grammar consultations, including Nausori which was at Vunimono Hall.

We had 52 in the Western Division where students came there and we had it at Natabua High School and we had it at some other location (I cannot remember the other location) where people in that district actually came together. It is a choice of the schools, and many of the teachers and head teachers actually want their students to come because they actually learn a lot. For example, just a few weeks ago before the cyclone came, we had a very important issue that was raised. It may not be directly related to the Budget as such but students were able vent out certain issues about the Ministry of Education. There was one young student, who raised an issue and said; "Why are we asked to do our assignments in handwritten form? Why cannot we submit it through the computer?" Now, someone, Madam Speaker....

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Because there was no computers.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, these people had access, Madam Speaker.

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Please, you do not know what you are talking about.

Madam Speaker, they actually had access to computers, but what they were saying is that someone in the Ministry of Education had decided some time back that when they submit their projects, it must be handwritten. So, they are saying this is preposterous.

It was very interesting when this lady spoke, the entire hall erupted into applause because they felt very strongly about that. Now, that is something that we obviously are able to learn, no one in the Ministry of Education told us about that but that is how the students actually felt about it. So, we were able to then actually ensure that certain policies are also changed. So, it is a very good feedback situation

and I can tell you, Madam Speaker, these students are extremely honest because we actually provide the enabling environment for them. It is, Madam Speaker, at the end of the day extremely empowering for them.

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

Progress on the River Diversion Programme  
(Question No. 124/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Waterways inform the House, what is the progress on the river diversion programme that is in place so as to mitigate flooding and river bank erosion?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Waterways).- Madam Speaker, I think it is an incomplete question.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Wait, wait! I will explain. Which river?

Madam Speaker, if you pick up the Budget Estimates, you will never find a specific programme for river diversion, but let me explain.

The river diversion channels or floodways are man-made channels built to provide an alternative route for excess water from natural rivers to discharge to the nearest outlet, either to another river or to the sea or to straighten up the river, Madam Speaker. And diversion channels mitigate the impacts of flood at downstream of diversion point, as well as upstream of the diversion point. So, Madam Speaker, we can do it upstream, may be a watershed or catchment area, we can do it downstream as well. Normally, Madam Speaker, diversion channels are built upstream or natural channels around cities and towns to mitigate the effect of flooding.

Madam Speaker, the first JICA study in watershed management and flood control for the four major Rivers in Viti Levu which was conducted in 1996 to 1998 over the period of two years, proposed the diversion channels for the Nadi River. The Nadi River diversion point was located upstream of Saunaka Village, parallel along the Enamanu Road to Nadi Bay. Hotels, apartments, residences and villages had been constructed along the Enamanu Road where the JICA had actually proposed for a diversion channel alignment.

Madam Speaker, due to the rapid development in the Nadi urban area and the extreme flooding events of 2012, the JICA Team revised the 1998 study for the Nadi watershed and prepared a long term master plan for the Flood Mitigation Programme with priority projects, such as river widening, retention ponds, construction of gates and downstream river dredging. So, Madam Speaker, the diversion channel proposed is no longer effective as it was proposed in the first study by JICA.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Waterways has been constructing flood mitigating dams in Nadi watershed as a strategy for mitigating floods. Two dams are in the Nawaka sub-catchment and two dams in the Namosi sub-catchment. Those are retention dams upstream, and the primary objective

of the retention dams, when there is addition volume of water coming down the waterway, these dams will retain that water and then release it slowly to smoothen the flow of water and the waterway downstream.

Madam Speaker, the fifth dam in Namosi River will commence soon, we have done all the initial design works.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Waterways will be outsourcing river dredging works for the Sigatoka River and Penang River as soon as tenders are being awarded. The Navua River Bank Erosion Protection Works for the Vunivau Village will be outsourced soon as tenders are being sorted out.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry is planning flood mitigation projects for the next financial year for the following rivers, the Sigatoka River Dredging - 3rd phase and the Labasa River Dredging which is ongoing. Over the last month, the dredger has been pulled out of the water, some little bit of mechanical work needs to be done and once it is done, we are looking at repairing that dredger in two weeks' time. It is a 40-year old dredger. Similarly, the Nausori River dredger is under repair work so the Rewa River and its tributaries will be dredged with the dredger that we have. All these dredgers are around 40 years old, Madam Speaker.

We have plans to clean up and dredge the Nasivi River, that is the river on the edge of Tavua Town. We are in the process of cleaning up the Penang River and widening it, as well as there will be a realignment of the River.

The Nakelo Bank Protection is the project in our books for the next financial year, as well the following projects:

1. Mouth dredging of Deuba River
2. Mouth dredging of Waikoko River;
3. Nadi River Maintenance and Dredging;
4. Nadakuni Bank Protection ,the Waidina River;
5. Mataniqara Bank Protection - Ba River;
6. Nawaqarua Bank Protection – Ba River;
7. Namara River Bank Protection - Labasa River;
8. Savu Village Bank Protection - Waidina River;
9. Serea Village - Wainimala River;
10. Wainawaqa Village – Waidina River; and
11. Wainibuabua River Bank Protection in Wainadoi.

These are some of the rivers that we have in our books for the next financial year. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. It is an indisputable fact that rivers and tributaries in Fiji, particularly in flood-prone areas have not been dredged for the last 12 years. Madam Speaker, one of the facts is that the rivers and drains are clogged with mud and overgrowth of grass which make them quite level with the roads. This is when there is no escape for water.

Madam Speaker, my question is, the clogged Namosau River in Ba is just one painful example of the reality. It devastated Yalalevu to the extent that concrete retaining walls were broken. Given the gravity of the destruction, can the Honourable Minister inform this House whether the programme that is in place is actually really working because we have heard a lot of Ministerial Statements in the March

sitting and in this one, and we have seen that there a lot of plans being done by consultants but none to those devastating places any more, Madam Speaker?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, first of all, a factually incorrect question. The Honourable Member said that there was no dredging of rivers for the last 12 years, which is factually incorrect. I will tell you, Madam Speaker, the rivers that were dredged over the last 12 years; Rewa River....

HON. P. SINGH.- I said most of the rivers.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- No, no. You said, no rivers were dredged over the 12 years.

Rewa River was dredged, Madam Speaker, and earlier this year we have been dredging Labasa River. In January, we commissioned the dredger but the dredger broke down about two weeks ago.

The Sigatoka River has been dredged, Madam Speaker, so I think it is rather unfortunate that the Honourable Member is giving incorrect information in this House.

(Honourable. P. Singh interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- No, no. And the next part of his question, Madam Speaker, was whether this plan is working?

Madam Speaker, you would have noted there was massive amount of rain in Labasa but Labasa Town was not flooded at all. Why?

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Look! He was talking about flooding in town. The Labasa Town for the first time ever, Madam Speaker, was not flooded because of the dredging of the Qawa River and the Labasa River.

Madam Speaker, Nadi Town, where the Honourable Member belongs to, this time around we did not have that level of flooding than it was before. Why?

(Honourable P. Singh interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Yes, yes! So, the question is, is it working? Yes, it is working, Madam Speaker. There are numerous projects that we have in our books, to ensure that downstream....

(Honourable P. Singh interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- No, Honourable Member. No, no!

Madam Speaker, in the Caribbean Region, a small States region and in the entire Pacific Region, this is the only Government that has established a dedicated Ministry.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Thank you to our Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable Minister for Economy for establishing the Ministry and for having a vision. Madam Speaker ...

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Please, interjections really should not disrupt because we want to hear what the Honourable Minister is saying.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I will add that some of the countries in the small States in the Caribbean Region and the Pacific Region are all talking about establishing a dedicated ministry for waterways, they are following suit. Thank you.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply. Now it is always certain that whenever it rains, all our rivers will be flooded. My question is, does the Ministry of Waterways have a system whereby you can monitor or plot all the areas that flood during every flooding period, so that you will know and study what are the causes of the flooding because the phenomenon now has changed. Some of the areas that used to flood before are no longer flooding and some new areas are flooding now. So what are the causes of all these changes? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, I will be presenting a Ministerial Statement later today on the surface water management which is the topic that kind of undercuts the question raised by the Honourable Member. But specifically to the issue raised by the Honourable Member about measuring the volume of water, that is something that we would want to do going forward. And I will be talking about it in my Ministerial Statement about every river where we need to examine the capacity and the volume of water. When we have got the peak rain time, what is the volume of water potentially under that and what is the volume that can be handled by that river and what will spill out. I will be talking about that in my Ministerial Statement. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- One of the effects of flooding is the erosion of banks especially the main tributaries of the Rewa River and the villages are located mostly on the river banks. This issue has come up through the Provincial Councils for years and I mention Serea, Nadakuni and even Wainawaqa now is in the budgetary allocation for next year. My question is, Madam Speaker, given the budget for next year, how soon will this be addressed because flooding comes so often and to make sure that the villagers are protected in some way from the effects of flooding in terms of erosion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the issue of river bank erosion is not a small issue, in fact the number of rivers that are being subjected to bank erosion is massive. . I was in Sigatoka last weekend, and I travelled along the Sigatoka River, massive amount of bank erosion and this did not start just start after the last flood but this has been happening for some time. Unfortunately, some 13 years ago we used to plant vetiver grass alongside the rivers and the roots grows down about 2 meters and really holds like a netting, it holds the bank.

We have just submitted a proposal of US\$200,000 to the Embassy of South Korea and they provide grants for climate change effects. We have just had discussions with SVC and there is quite a lot of funding available, Madam Speaker. We are looking at nationwide massive drive in terms of vetiver grass planting and we want to lead this drive with the community.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, there will be a number of rivers where we will be designing river bank protection but again that is a very expensive measure but we need to be proactive, so we have to do a major nationwide drive. To answer his question about when it is going to start and finish, Madam Speaker, we are going to start after the budget and it is not a one-year project, it is not a two-year project, Madam Speaker, because there is a massive amount of work that needs to be done. But we have identified this issue, we know the problem, we know what needs to be done, Madam Speaker, and in the budget submission we are addressing this issue for the upcoming budget. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Nawaikula, supplementary question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, every time the rain falls, all the rivers are flooded. Could the Honourable Minister inform us, how many dredging machines are there and whether there is enough to solve our problem?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Again, Madam Speaker, if you look at the first part of his question, he says all the rivers are flooded. Not all the rivers are flooded. The second part of his question was, how many dredgers we have?

Madam Speaker, we have two Government-owned dredgers – one in Labasa and one in Nausori. We are looking at replacing this dredger. We had \$3 million factored in. We are looking at using the \$3 million in the next financial year to buy dredgers. We are also talking with two development partners to provide us with three smaller dredgers which can enter into smaller waterways.

But, Madam Speaker, all these are really reactionary approach to desilting the rivers. Madam Speaker, later on I will be talking about where the problem really starts. The problem starts because we do not have any catchment committee, we do not have plans about managing our catchment and watershed.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Wait! Because of that, Madam Speaker, because of transformation on the upper water sheds, there is massive amount of soil being eroded down into our waterways, down to the downstream and fills up the waterways downstream.

Madam Speaker, there is nothing we can do in three months' time to fix that problem. What were they doing to manage our watersheds - catchment committees? Nothing is there. Willy-nilly people are logging, willy-nilly people are transforming forest area into agriculture and that is what has resulted in the filling up of downstream waterways with desilting materials ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Just wait and see, we will implement a major plan next year. Thank you.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. We all know that the answer to this is dredging in the immediate term. We saw images of villages being submerged, in my area, Nalele and Naveisabasaba, people had to flee to higher grounds.

Madam Speaker, he talked about two major dredging operations in the country and growing somewhat. But, is there any incentive for other companies to take up dredging as part of their business? Can you give them subsidy on heavy equipment and the like? Is there something out there because dredging is the answer to all these and we need to broaden the base for the operators to operate in Fiji; are you getting more to undertake that type of work? Thank you.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Dredging is not the answer, Madam Speaker. Dredging is a panadol solution. The real answer is to fix upstream watershed and catchment area and also the nature of cultivation. But, Madam Speaker, we are outsourcing. There are companies with dredgers in Fiji, we are outsourcing to attract them. Secondly, Madam Speaker, we are talking to a company in a central area who is willing to assist us in dredging in return for keeping the silt material and they want to sell it. There is that incentive that in areas where the communities do not need the dredged materials which is then, in those cases, we are willing to engage that particular company that would dredge it and then keep the silt material. Thank you.

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

Outcome of Constructive Dialogue – 5th CEDAW State Report  
(Question No. 125/2018)

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

Fiji ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1995 and presented its 5th State CEDAW Report in 2014, and earlier this year participated in the Constructive Dialogue in Geneva. Can the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation inform the House on the outcomes of the Constructive Dialogue on the 5th CEDAW State Report?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA (Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation).- Madam Speaker, as stated Fiji being party to CEDAW since 1995 carries an obligation to submit State Reports on a four-yearly basis to the CEDAW Committee in Geneva. Part of that obligation, Madam Speaker, is to advise and inform the CEDAW Committee on how Fiji is doing on a national level on the implementation of our international obligations under CEDAW.

Earlier this year Madam Speaker, a Fijian delegation comprising of myself and staff, Permanent Secretary and also the Director Women including an officer from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Solicitor General's Office and also the office in Geneva. We fronted up before the CEDAW Committee to answer questions on our State report.

It was a great experience for Fiji as a nation to realise that there is a committee internationally that actually monitors our work nationally and to advise us on steps forward, how we can further strengthen our national efforts not only on Government side but also non-government organisations and civil society organisations on how we can further our aim in fully implementing our international obligations under CEDAW. Yes, Madam Speaker, that has been done and we are now working towards the implementation of those observations.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula.



HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, one of the concerns raised is that Fiji is not doing enough to combat violence against women, Fiji is not doing enough to prosecute people who do violence against women and Fiji is not doing enough to enlarge these shelters. Could the Honourable Minister explain what will her Government do in relation to those?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, I think it is not a secret. Everyone knows that violence against women and children in our country is a real issue that we all need to grapple with and deal with, not only Government but civil society organisations, non-government organisations, religious bodies, families and down to a person individually.

What are we doing? I think we all know as Members of Parliament what we have done on a policy level, and on a legislative level in relation to combating violence against women.

I would like to itemise a few of them, the Domestic Violence Act which is in place. Following that, in March this year, the launch of the Service Delivery Protocol which brings together stakeholders which deal with the issue of domestic violence to have a coordinated effort when such victims present themselves either to Police, Health or whatever authority that they do.

Madam Speaker, we also have on a policy level, the 'no drop' policy by Police. There is a great effort going on nationally and yes, our statistics are still rising, it calls for concern for all of us and particularly, us in this House as parliamentarians. The question we need to ask ourselves going forward is, what can we do, what can we do further or better in relation to this?

As a Government, as a Ministry, we stand ready to receive such recommendations and I am grateful for the recommendations, the concluding observations made by the CEDAW Committee which is very constructive as is the nature of the constructive dialogue. It is constructive in the sense that it helps us to map stronger platforms in combating gender based violence in our society.

On that note Madam Speaker, I would also like to say thank you to those religious organisations and I would like to point one out in particular, the Archbishop of the Catholic Church, in his Easter message. He emphasised the whole message on gender based violence and violence against women. These are the kinds of messages that we need to see more often out in the public arena and I think as parliamentarians, I believe that we also have a role in preaching this very important subject whenever we have an opportunity to do so.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for that explanation. For the constructive dialogue outcomes, they need to be implemented and for the implementation as called for by the coalition of NGO's in their shadow report, they called for Government support and also in terms of resources allocation.

Madam Speaker, there is only \$1.4 million allocated for the implementation of the Women Plan of Action, that is very small. The question is; can the Honourable Minister explain to this House how can they implement the outcome of the Constructive Dialogue with only \$1.4 million in place, and if that can be increased in the upcoming Budget process? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Yes, implementation is a very important point in relation to the concluding observations made by the CEDAW Committee. What are we doing in relation to the implementation? Following the Constructive Dialogue in Geneva and following the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, on the Monday before the recent cyclone there was a Ministerial Forum at the Holiday Inn, calling in together the leaders of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) for this very purpose. We put to them the concluding observations of CEDAW, ones that we can address in the short-term and asked for their input on what they could do and how we could assist them in achieving those results.

Madam Speaker, I think the implementation of the concluding observations of CEDAW, it needs a concerted effort between Government and NGOs, CSOs and development partners. We know that and we are taking concrete steps to realising that, by bringing together these stakeholders, hearing them out and putting together a solid plan for implementing those concluding observations. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- I thank the Honourable Minister for her response in terms of the 5<sup>th</sup> CEDAW State Report. She had also asked us in this House as to what we can do.

When we look at the list of those who had gone to Geneva, there was no Opposition Member being included in the Report. Why are we are not included in this when we are Members of this House, that is a consolidated report and it needs a concerted effort from all of us. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for the question, it highlights to me the lack of information on the CEDAW process, Madam Speaker.

The delegation that I referred to is the Government delegation. When we come before the CEDAW Committee, it is the State, it is the Government that is put to account for its national efforts.

Apart from the 5<sup>th</sup> State Report which every Government is required to present and for the information of the House, Madam Speaker, when this Report was being put together, there was a national consultations on it both, within Government and also outside of Government.

Apart from the State Periodic Report, CSOs and NGOs also have an opportunity to present their own report. This is call the Shadow Report. They basically criticise the State Report and they also appear before the CEDAW Committee to give their version of how events are unfolding in our nation. That, Madam Speaker, is the mechanism that is in place so that not only Government is heard, but those outside of Government.

As for the answering of questions before the CEDAW Committee, the delegation I referred to which I believe the Honourable Member had referred to, it is only the State that is required to appear before the CEDAW Committee. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, my question had been asked.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister has highlighted the sorry state of affairs in Fiji in regards to violence against women and children. And we all know, Madam Speaker, that the biggest cause of violence in families is poverty. Our Government has only come up with a minimum wage of \$2.68 an hour, not enough! Can our Government emulate the position of SODELPA and NFP, increase the minimum wage to \$5 an hour and hence, remove poverty and remove violence in families?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, that question really brings home again, the lack of understanding on the causes of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is not about being poor, it has to do with unequal power relations in a country. It has to do with male dominance and power structures within societies.

When I talk about this, Madam Speaker, I would invite Honourable Members to read a Report by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, *'Somebody's Life, Everybody's Business'*. It talks about this and it goes right down to the basics of the causes of gender-based violence and it is not about being poor. Rich women get abused as well, Madam Speaker, it is to do with unequal power relations and I think it also brings home to me the need to educate our Honourable Members and further sensitise them on the issues of gender-based violence. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Anare Vadei.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for the report. Can she advise this Parliament whether they can establish women caucus in our Fiji Parliament to discuss the report of this constructive dialogue?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- I think, Madam Speaker, the question is asking me to use your position as Speaker and the Honourable Secretary General's position in the House. So, our part in the Ministry, we are setting up a committee also on CEDAW implementation and this will look towards forwarding to every institution, as highlighted in the concluding observations the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, the last question.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, in fact, there are multiple causes for increase in gender violence, and poverty is one of them. If you look at the statistics for the last 11 years, there has been a huge increase in domestic violence and the Commissioner of Police, for example, talked about and said there was a 300 percent increase in sexual violence against children. And I agree with the Honourable Minister when she pointed out the role of the religious organisations, so my question to her is whether her Ministry and the Government is actually planning to put some resources into various religious organisation so that there is a specific and targeted agenda to create this awareness so that we can reduce violence against women and children.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Minister.

HON. V.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, I reiterate the answer that I had given earlier in relation to the ministerial forum, I think one sector that I forgot to mention is the faith-based organisations. They are also part of the discussions in relation to the implementation of the CEDAW Recommendations and the dialogue will continue on how we can assist them further to strengthen the role that they already play in relation to the elimination of violence against women and children. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, it is time for a break. We will break for refreshment and we will adjourn our sitting until 11.00 a.m. Thank you.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.33 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.02 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will now resume from where we left off, and I will give the floor to the Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, the Leader of Opposition to ask her question.

Enhancement of NCD Prevention through Sports  
(Question No. 126/2018)

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

With our victorious Fiji 7s Team winning the Hong Kong 7s four times in a row, what is the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Service's plans for building on and transferring their championship status from the sports field to enhancing NCD prevention which is decimating our youth population?

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

Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about NCDs in this House as well as a lot of things being highlighted by the media. Yes, NCD, is a real issue for our people and stated by the question, how we intend to transfer the championship of our Hong Kong 7s heroes from the sports field, enhancing NCD prevention which is decimating our youth population.

Madam Speaker, NCDs are not only affecting our youth population, it is affecting all Fijians including probably you and I in this House. So, yes, it is a very serious issue and it poses a lot of pressure on our health system. We have always highlighted in the news, et cetera, that 80 percent of the death that happens in our hospitals and outside hospitals can be attributed to NCDs.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about NCDs, we talk about diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, cardiac issues, just to name a few and these are chronic ones - ongoing ones.

NCDs, Madam Speaker, can be prevented with proper diet, physical activity and, of course, discipline when it comes to getting regular checks and taking their medication. There are a lot of impacts of NCDs and one of the impacts is premature death, low productivity, too much dependency on medicine, low quality of life and, of course, loss of life very prematurely.

At the moment, Madam Speaker, the Centre for Non-Communicable Diseases which is headed by our National Advisor, Dr. Tukana, they are creating a lot of awareness programmes within our communities but at the end of the day, if I may say, it is about choices, lifestyle and it is something that we all know, but we want to draw inspiration from someone else to tell us what to do. We have our NCD Champion, our President, we have just had Jasa Veremalua, who is now our ambassador for dengue with our new Wolbachia Programme that is going on and at the moment, we do not have any plans to engage our Fiji Sevens' heroes but, Madam Speaker, that is something that we can look at.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. I agree it is about our lifestyle and choices as the Honourable Minister has stated.

Two weeks ago, Madam Speaker, in the Lautoka Hospital, there were three people who had below the knee amputation and they were in their early 30s. What the surgeon said was that their limb

was beyond redemption. So, Madam Speaker, that is very much a concern and we speak about it everyday here in Parliament.

Two years ago a working document was presented and it was the National Physical Activity and Health document in relation particularly to NCDs, was forwarded to the Ministry by FASANOC and the Olympic Committee. Madam Speaker, a Committee was formed but nothing else has been done. My question is; how can the Ministry of Health with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth and Sports, et cetera, work together towards a more creative and more proactive effective interventions in terms of the NCDs?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to seek further clarification on the report that the Honourable Member is talking about. But, yes, NCD issues like I said, will be addressed and can be addressed and are being addressed in a multi stakeholder way. We are working with the Ministry of Education to ensure that we implement the healthy guideline policies within our canteens, so we have already started that.

I am not aware of our collaboration with Ministry of Youth. I could forward you an answer at the later date but, yes, I can inform the House and say that it is indeed a multi stakeholder collaboration that is needed, not only within Government Ministries but within our CSOs and faith-based organisations.

If I may say, 50 of us here can actually play a very, very important part because not only are we presented by our people, but we are voice for our people, so this information can also go down to our communities. This could be part of our agenda when we go out, reaching our people to promote healthy living by growing and consuming our own fresh fruits and vegetables.

At the moment, the Ministry of Health is promoting a healthy plate. It is surprising to see what we eat, how much we eat, when we eat, so that is the personal discipline that is needed to be promoted within every individual - the right time to eat, the right types of food to eat and the right amounts of food to eat. A classic example would be when we go out for our breaks, let us start with ourselves.

Yesterday, people were complimenting that the morning tea and the lunch was healthy. Again the whole crux of the matter here is, Madam Speaker, individuals are responsible for their health.

Yes, I agree with the Honourable Member, who said that more and more young people are losing their limbs and this is because of the magnitude of the disease. This is because of uncontrolled high blood pressure, uncontrolled sugar levels in our blood that leads to that.

Sometimes patients reach our hospitals and there is no choice left. If you want to save the life, you have to cut off the limb and that is the reality of our situation, Madam Speaker. So let us all become champions of healthy living and I am sure that that is something that is achievable. Let us promote that self-discipline within ourselves, let start with ourselves and take it down to our communities.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. In terms of new medical facilities, I want to refer to the new Makoi Maternity Unit. I have been told that while the new centre is appreciative, it is virtually underutilised and I know a case where a woman actually ended up there in a taxi and was transferred to the CWM Hospital. I just want to know from the Honourable Minister whether we have the facilities and whether we have the staff at the new Makoi Maternity Unit so that it is fully operational and it serves the purpose for which it was built. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, is this regarding our new facilities or is it related to NCDs?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- New facilities, it is there.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- That is coming later, Madam Speaker, and I will provide a response when that question comes. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- She will provide the answer. Honourable Dr. Samisoni?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and thank you Honourable Minister for your answer.

For me as a manager in the information economy of today, I think the question of branding is very important. Here are successful people, all we need to do is take a photo of them and then put it against all your messages that you are talking about, education and all that sort of thing. I know you did say that you would look at it but I think it should be used today, we live in the knowledge economy, branding should be used.

The question is branding, yes, by when? It is a very important, it will cost you very little, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess I understand the Honourable Member. Her question was to use prominent people as Brand Ambassadors. Like I have said, we already have our President as a Brand Ambassador for NCD, we are now using Jasa Veremalua for our mosquito dengue outbreak. Of course like I said, it is a suggestion that can be looked at.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Gavoka?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Over here, we are talking about our youths and we are talking about sports. In the next few days, there will be Coca-Cola Games. Now, we know that sponsorship is important, Coca-Cola is a big company but perception can be dangerous for youths engaging in athletics and whatever, by the perception is that it is all right to drink Coca-Cola. Can you relook at these arrangement with Coca-Cola and perhaps, brand the sport with another of Coca-Cola's product that is safe for our children to drink?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, I will not be able to answer your question fully. That is something for the Ministry of Education and the Government as a whole to look at. But I would still like to emphasise, yes, advertisements are powerful but our emphasis is on the choices that you make. The advertisements can really be powerful and persuasive but at the end of the day it is the choice that one makes. I am sure the youths of the country we talk about, we need to empower them, they make their choice.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Dulakiverata?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplementary question. Talking about our youth, Madam Speaker, if we are to detect the NCDs earlier, do we have a programme in schools where we can detect children who have NCDs and they can have some early intervention, so that they improve and do not get affected by the NCDs.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. Yes, Madam Speaker, we have a lot of community outreach teams that go out to communities, that go out to schools for positive early interventions and yes these cases are referred back to the clinicians and doctors at the health centres and hospitals.

HON. SPEAKER.- The last question, Honourable Niko Nawaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A lot of these depends on monitoring and in this, I wish to thank all the NGOs that are coming from overseas, making available their services to the rural area. Could the Honourable Minister explain to us how many of these NGOs are conducting these and what kind of assistance is the Government giving to them to conduct their free checks? They went around the villages and even here, because without them you would not know. They had a test here that was done last week and they told me that my sugar and my pressure was up, but I would not know. But these are NGOs that are coming from overseas, so what kind of assistance is the Government giving to them or assisting them to do this in the rural areas which they are doing?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Yes, Honourable Member, I am surprised that you have to wait for an NGO to come and do your check when you can just walk into any hospital and health centre for a free check. Madam Speaker, in terms of NGOs and other overseas visiting teams, the specialist teams that come into the country, a lot of them come on their own accord as part of their charity work. There are many NGOs that we work with directly, they come and register with us and then our teams guide them to the areas where the services are available. In case of those NGOs that conduct surgeries and other procedures on our people, yes, we work with them. Initially what used to happen, Madam Speaker, the visiting teams would be registered and they had to pay a fee.

Last year, Madam Speaker, we made a new policy where we waived the fee for the doctors and the nurses who come and provide services to our people. A similar team at the moment is at CWM Hospital operating on our children who have severe heart conditions and if I might put on record here, Madam Speaker, we are very appreciative of these NGOs and teams that actually complement the work that we do. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I now give the floor to the Honourable Jilila Kumar to ask her question.

Update on all New Health Facilities  
(Question No. 127/2018)

HON. J.N. KUMAR asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Minister provide an update on all the new health facilities that have been opened as from last year till to date and how will these new facilities assist further with the current services?



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, there were three health facilities that were opened last year to date. The first one was the opening of the upgraded Lautoka Emergency Department and the New Operating Theatres, and these were opened in July 2017.

This development, Madam Speaker, was timely in response to the significant increase in the Accident and Emergency (A&E) attendants, General Outpatient attendants and the Paediatric Outpatient attendants that was beyond the capacity of the existing health facility. This new facility was developed through an allocation of \$16 million from the Ministry of Health budget to expand and upgrade the Lautoka A&E and, of course, to enable the public to be provided with a more efficient service, improved quality care and of course, enable the hospital staff to attend to the increasing number of patients. Madam Speaker, this development also accommodates the needs of the greater increasing number of the population in the Western Division.

The A&E has the capacity to deliver to a larger number of population, like I said, with greater efficiency and since opening its doors last year, we have been able to assist nearly 4,000 patients in Surgery, Orthopaedic, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Ophthalmology, Cardiac, Urology and Dental services. Similarly, Madam Speaker, the newly constructed Makoi Maternity Unit was a much awaited facility for women and children, not only for the Suva-Nausori corridor but for the nation as a whole. This was opened on 16th February and cost us \$7.3 million, equipped with modern medical equipment again worth around \$300,000 to assist in providing a high standard of maternal healthcare services to the population of Makoi and the surrounding communities.

Madam Speaker, this new Makoi Maternity Unit will improve access to maternity services and relieve the congestion at the CWM Hospital. The Unit provides services from Suva-Nausori corridor and supports the high demand in the Central Division. The Unit also has the capacity to provide ante-natal and post-natal clinics. The low risk Birthing Unit for Makoi should be able to manage about 800 deliveries in a year. Mothers for Ante-natal Clinic from around the greater Nasinu area, Valelevu, Nakasi and referrals from other centres can utilize these facilities. The Maternal Child Health Clinic at Makoi Health Centre is now relocated to the new Makoi Maternity Unit and expectant mothers are now cared for in a spacious new facility.

Madam Speaker, in answer to the question raised earlier, there are plans to commence full birthing services for the low risk mothers as the second phase of the service development at the new maternity by end of June this year. The Unit will primarily be serviced by experienced mid-wives and we are re-engaging midwives to work with the obstetricians based at the CWM. So we are preparing for the second stage and of course this will again be a milestone achievement for the Ministry in terms of birthing facilities along this corridor.

Madam Speaker, the maternal death ratio data has fallen from 39.2 percent for the 2011 and 2013 period to 30.9 percent live births in the 2013-2015 period. Of course, like I said, this new facility when the second phase is completed will definitely ease the pressure and demand for maternal services at CWM as currently 8,500 deliveries are done alone at CWM Hospital. Besides that, the new facility when completed in the second phase, will also broaden the healthcare services for both mothers and children, and also provide primary care services under one roof.

Madam Speaker, the third facility that opened was on 28th March this year and this was the Waimaro Health Centre in Ra now upgraded to a Level C Health Centre. This facility is also very unique in its design and provides a whole range of services compared to what was a nursing station then. It has been upgraded to a health centre and of course this nursing station was damaged by *TC Winston*. Now it is completed, fully fledged and in operation.

Madam Speaker, this was through the ongoing support of the Australian Government which helped us rebuild this new health centre to replace the nursing station that was destroyed. Again, the services provided are broad in range. We have general outpatients now, primary healthcare and dental service and will also serve as a base for our zone nurse for the area. Other services that is now included at Waimaro is the Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) screenings, SOPD clinics, monitoring and management, maternal child health services inclusive of ante-natal care and of course, the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) and reproductive health. We have an area for Outpatient's Consultations in the new Waimaro Health Centre, a treatment room, a pharmacy, a waiting room and a two-bed observation room for emergency cases including deliveries and of course a delivery room.

Madam Speaker, apart from that, the new facilities that will be opening shortly is the much-awaited Nakasi Health Centre which is near completion and is in the equipment stage so we should be seeing the opening of that in a couple of months. We are awaiting the extension to be completed in Koro Island for a clinic there. Again, that has been upgraded to Level C Health Centre fully funded by Access Quality of Education Program (AQEP) and we expect to open it in June this year.

The extension of the CWMH Maternity Unit that is currently in design phase, Madam Speaker, is going to cost us around \$50 million - \$60 million and we hope to see the construction to be implemented soon. So, Madam Speaker, these are the new facilities and the impact that it is having on our people. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Minister for highlighting all the new facilities. Madam Speaker, my question to the Minister is, do we have ambulance services available at some of these new health facilities because I remember we had a case at Korovou and we had to actually hire an ambulance from Suva and provided the support to the doctor to accompany the patient from Korovou to Suva. So I am just wondering whether we have ambulance facilities in some of these new centres.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I would like to thank Honourable Prasad for the question. Yes, Honourable Prasad, the new facilities have been equipped with new ambulances. Actually we received 18 as part of the donation from the People's Republic of China and that was distributed early last week. As part of the Government fleet, we have 44. Some of these ambulances are pretty old and need maintenance on a regular basis. We also work with National Fire Authority, we also work with Fiji Corrections Service and we work with St. John regarding the provision of ambulance services.

Yes, sometimes there are urgent cases where individual families would assist us in hiring ambulances to take their loved ones to the next centre. Unfortunately that is a reality but I hope with the addition of the 18 new ambulances, we have actually sent, if I am correct about six to the North. We have kept about eight, again I stand to be corrected but the numbers that were given to us have been distributed to provide service to the people. Thank you.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) made some very serious attacks on the Ministry of Health for bad management of its projects against the contractors and even against the personnel and if I can just give some examples.

For Naulu, the OAG recommended the Ministry to conduct an investigation on the sub-contractor. For the new medical waste that was supposed to be done in Nadi, Taveuni and Savusavu, they recommended investigation. For Makoi, it also recommended an investigation. Could the Honourable Minister advise this House whether these investigations had been conducted and whether any of those involved had been disciplined or charges laid in relation to those?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank Honourable Nawaikula for the question. Yes, I do not actually know which incidences you are talking about, but any flaws identified by the Auditor-General is taken very seriously. And I think one point for us all to ponder on is, that why there is a need for the Civil Service Reform. We need the right people doing the right job.

Obviously, anyone who is involved in such instances is definitely referred to the.....

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- I will not be able to answer that now. There are cases pending with FICAC and maybe later on, you can ask me that question, I would be better prepared to answer that.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you Honourable Minister for your explanation. First, I want make to a clarification, if you had mentioned anything on the upgrade of Keiyasi to subdivisional hospital. If not, then please explain why that has not been done as promised in the 2017-2018 Budget?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I would like to Honourable Member again.

Honourable Member the question was, how many new facilities have been opened?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, we recently initiated the ground-breaking ceremony of a hospital project by the Honourable Prime Minister and that was the upgrade of Keiyasi Health Centre, now upgraded to a subdivisional hospital. This facility will serve the interior of Nadroga/Navosa and Ba Provinces and any other areas in the highlands, and expected to be completed in the next 18 months or so. Yes, the Keiyasi Project has already started. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Lastly, Honourable Dulakiverata.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, before the Nausori Hospital was budgeted and was to be built but later the Government informed that the land in Vuniivivi Hill that was allocated for it was not suitable. This is 2018, whether the Ministry had found an alternative site for the new hospital and when will this hospital be relocated?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, I think the other side sometimes does not listen to the questions they ask. This question was already answered previously but if I may inform the House again, yes, I will provide an answer to that, Madam Speaker.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, yes, we are still committed to building a new health facility in Nausori. Unfortunately, like mentioned previously, the land that was allocated for that was not suitable for the design and we are in the process of identifying another land to cater for the needs of the people.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni to ask her question.

Roles and responsibilities – Divisional Drainage Boards  
(Question No. 128/2018)

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Waterways explain to the House what is the role and responsibilities of the respective Divisional Drainage Boards?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Waterways).- Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for asking this question. Of course, the answer to this question lies in Clause 8(1) of the Drainage Act, but let me give you a background. I will read for you.

Madam Speaker, as you know, the origins of Fiji islands is through volcanic eruptions and, therefore, there is limited amount of land which are arable, mostly close to the coastal area. In 1935 to ensure that these land are cultivable and can be used for various crop agriculture, the Drainage Act was developed to assist in dealing with waterlogged areas around the coastal area to make these land arable.

Madam Speaker, these drainage areas fall under the three Divisions - the Central Division Drainage Board, Western Division Drainage Board and Northern Division Drainage Board. As alluded to earlier on, initially the drainage schemes were established under the 1975 Drainage Act which was then revised in 1985. As the Acts stipulates, Clause 8(1)(a) states, I quote:

“... be responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the drainage of all land within the drainage area for which it is appointed.”

Madam Speaker, the drainage areas are declared in the gazette known as Drainage Schemes. There are a total of 92 designated Drainage Schemes throughout Fiji, as follows:

1. 40 in the Central Division,
2. 40 in the Western Division; and
3. 12 in the Northern Division.

In the Central Division ( Nausori area), we have:

1. Vuci South Drainage Scheme;
2. Lakena/Manoca/Waituri Drainage Scheme;
3. Korociriciri Drainage Scheme;

4. Verata Drainage Scheme;
5. Buiduna Drainage Scheme;
6. Naduru Drainage Scheme;
7. Kuku Drainage Scheme;
8. Naila Drainage Scheme;
9. Waikula/Vusuya Drainage Scheme;
10. Dravo/Mokani Drainage Scheme;
11. Dravutu Drainage Scheme;
12. Cautata Drainage Scheme;
13. Qaraniki Drainage Scheme;
14. Matacaucau Drainage Scheme;
15. Rewa Delta Nakorovou Drainage Scheme;
16. Koronivia East Drainage Scheme;
17. Koronivia West Drainage Scheme;
18. Baulevu/Muaniweni Drainage Scheme;
19. Navuso Drainage Scheme;
20. Kasavu Drainage Scheme;
21. Viria Drainage Scheme;
22. Wainikia Drainage Scheme;
23. Waila 1 Drainage Scheme;
24. Waila 2 Drainage Scheme;
25. Saunitabu Drainage Scheme;
26. Naitasiri Drainage Scheme; and
27. Nasi Drainage Scheme.

In Navua, we have a total of 13 Drainage Schemes:

1. Deuba Drainage Scheme;
2. Tamanoa Drainage Scheme;
3. Narara Drainage Scheme;
4. Nasasa Drainage Scheme;
5. Nakaulevu Drainage Scheme;
6. Qarailulu Drainage Scheme;
7. Ravodrau Drainage Scheme;
8. Veiwawa Drainage Scheme;
9. Waikalou Drainage Scheme;
10. Mokosoi Drainage Scheme;
11. Lebanon Drainage Scheme;
12. Waidradra Drainage Scheme; and
13. Waiyanitu Drainage Scheme.

In the Western Division, Madam Speaker, in Sigatoka we got three Drainage Schemes:

1. Oloolo Drainage Scheme;
2. Maro Drainage Scheme; and
3. Lomawai Drainage Scheme.

In Nadi, Madam Speaker, we have got nine Drainage Schemes:

1. Nasoso Drainage Scheme;
2. Solovi 1 Drainage Scheme;
3. Solovi 2 Drainage Scheme;

4. Meigunyah Drainage Scheme;
5. Navakai Drainage Scheme;
6. Maqalevu Drainage Scheme;
7. Waqadra Drainage Scheme;
8. Qeleloa Drainage Scheme; and
9. Namoli/Meigunyah Drainage Scheme.

Madam Speaker, in Lautoka, we have got a total of eight Drainage Schemes:

1. Lovu/Vitogo Drainage Scheme;
2. Lomolomo(vs) Drainage Scheme;
3. Drasa 1 Drainage Scheme;
4. Drasa 2 Drainage Scheme;
5. Teidamu Drainage Scheme;
6. Naviago Drainage Scheme;
7. Natabua Drainage Scheme; and
8. Lomolomo(Drasa) Drainage Scheme.

Madam Speaker, in Ba, we have got six Drainage Schemes:

1. Raviravi Drainage Scheme;
2. Sarava Drainage Scheme;
3. Navatu Drainage Scheme;
4. Talecake Drainage Scheme;
5. Togalevu Drainage Scheme; and
6. Votua Drainage Scheme.

Madam Speaker, in Tavua, we have two Drainage Schemes:

1. Nabuna Drainage Scheme; and
2. Toko Drainage Scheme.

In Rakiraki, we have got 12 Drainage Schemes:

1. Barotu Drainage Scheme;
2. Naqoro Drainage Scheme;
3. Ellington Drainage Scheme;
4. Caboni Drainage Scheme;
5. Dokanavatu Drainage Scheme;
6. Vunidawa Drainage Scheme;
7. Vaidoko Drainage Scheme;
8. Draunivii Drainage Scheme;
9. Penang Drainage Scheme;
10. Namonamo Drainage Scheme;
11. Rukuruku Drainage Scheme; and
12. Burenitu Drainage Scheme.

Madam Speaker, in Labasa, we have got 12 Drainage Schemes:

1. Tabucola/Qalowaqa Drainage Scheme;
2. Wailevu Drainage Scheme;
3. Nasea Drainage Scheme;

4. Korowiri Drainage Scheme;
5. Nagigi/Naleba/Coqeloa Drainage Scheme;
6. Siberia Drainage Scheme;
7. Navoalevu Drainage Scheme;
8. Mouta Drainage Scheme;
9. Lagalaga Drainage Scheme;
10. Walana Drainage Scheme;
11. Vunimako Drainage Scheme; and
12. Taganikula Drainage scheme.

Madam Speaker, we are now looking forward to reviewing the Drainage Act and to modernise it, as well as make it applicable to the overall objective and vision of the newly established Ministry of Waterways. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni, supplementary question.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- I know the Drainage Act and the Irrigation Act looks after the Drainage Board but for you as Minister of Waterways you do not have an Act. The reason I say this, Madam Speaker, is for me as an investor, as a business person I have just bought land, my own home in Lami and was flooded after *TC Josie* and *TC Keni*. I know Lami is a *dogo* (mangrove) reclaimed area that was done long time ago and the water is coming up. I did not expect it to get flooded, the home was designed by an architect and structural engineers, now they have to put new drains.

My question is; the infrastructure or the drainage particularly with the climate change that is coming on and happening in Fiji, but I am linking that to another land that we bought for business, Madam Speaker, and it is still flooding today. I just wanted to know that I am having problems as an investor, as a business woman here in the East. Thank you.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, if you construct a house on *dogo* reclaimed land, you will expect saltwater to come in when it is high tide. This is common sense, Madam Speaker.

Secondly, the Honourable Member never raised an issue about Lami. Did you? You are coming here in Parliament to raise the matter. You should have come to me, come to our staff in the Ministry of Waterways.

(Honourable Dr. M.T. Samisoni interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Thirdly, it happened again, but when it happened in the first time you should have brought it to us.

(Honourable Dr. M.T. Samisoni interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- It was not built yesterday.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Fourthly, Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Waterways has been established to look at drainage issues outside towns and cities and outside the sugar industry. The Honourable Member like any other Member, should bring the matter to us. She has been in Parliament in the last sitting when I presented a Ministerial Statement to explain how we are going to now look at issues of drainage throughout Fiji. So, the Honourable Member is welcomed to come to our office at

Bali House, Toorak, and bring the matter to our attention and our staff will attend to the matter. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. A supplementary question, Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Minister in relation to this drainage, we know well-planned and clear policies as opposed to his own Ministry which is ad hoc. There is no policy by which the Ministry is based. When will this policy be created and hopefully, result in an Act where you can be accountable? Otherwise it is all ad hoc.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member wants to form a government but does not know how when ministries are established.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- But what are you? We don't know.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Let me explain to him, Madam Speaker. When our ministry was established, there are relevant legislations which are brought under that particular ministry. We do have a legislation which empowers us to undertake work. Thank you.

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjects)

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

HON. DR. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I think that question really was on the roles and responsibilities of Drainage Boards. I know the Act clearly states that there is a controlling authority, my question to the Honourable Minister is, whether there is a controlling authority and if it is, whether it is working properly in terms of looking at the roles and responsibilities of the Drainage Boards throughout the country?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, there are three active Drainage Boards. One had a meeting last week in the Central Division. In the Western Division, I have been working very closely with the Drainage Board. The Chairman is one of the three active Chairmen's we have in the Western Division. The Labasa Drainage Board, I met with them on Monday when I was there last week, despite the warning for cyclone, I was there and the Chairman travelled with me to a number of areas. I caught the last flight on that day coming back to Suva. All of them are functional, all of them are working with us very closely to ensure that we also deliver outside the drainage scheme mandate. Thank you.

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

Inshore Fisheries Sector – Activities and Programmes  
(Question No. 129/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries highlight the activities and programmes the Ministry is currently undertaking to improve the current status of the inshore fisheries sector?



HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU (Minister for Fisheries).- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for this important question.

It is important for the Honourable Members to note that our inshore fisheries management and conservation issues need our urgent attention. This has been the focus of the Government and the Ministry of Fisheries, while we improve and implement the management and conservation strategies of our coastal fisheries sector. The Ministry is currently working with all relevant partners and stakeholders to strengthen our partnership to enhance and improve the Ministry's role in raising awareness through educational activities.

Madam Speaker, overfishing and illegal fishing is rampant across the country. The Ministry through relevant partners have worked together to effectively address the issue. An example to this work done last year is to identify hotspots through surveillance exercises. Through the assistance rendered to Fiji by asset providers, we are now able to focus our resources in areas of high risk. This has helped reduce illegal fishing in areas that were identified.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, Members of the House will be aware that the Ministry has ventured into a more proactive approach to ensure sustainability. These approaches include management options such as moratoriums, total bans, seasonal closures and size limits and these are some of the activities that are aimed at ensuring sustainability.

Species that are protected through this management option includes sea cucumber, corals, *kawakawa* and *donu* (grouper and coral trout), turtles, shark and rays, large reef fish species such as Hammerhead Maori Wrasse (*Varivoce*), Bumphead Parrot fish (*Kalia*), Giant Groupers (*Kavu*) and Giant Sweetlips (*Drekei-ni-toga*).

Madam Speaker, noting that coastal fisheries cover a vast area which is dispersed by geographic locations, raising awareness is not an easy task. To help address this, the Ministry of Fisheries through collaboration, continues to work with NGOs, religious groups, academic institutions and coastal communities through the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas network. Moreover collaboration with line agencies is also being strengthened.

The focus of the Ministry of Fisheries is to work with line agencies in identifying ways to better improve the current state of coastal resources. Collaboration with the Ministry of Lands, Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Health are some of the immediate agencies that have been part of the fisheries forum. Items such as fisheries management, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, marine pollution, poaching and lack of scientific data are some of the initiatives that are being dealt with through line agencies across Fiji.

Madam Speaker, with the findings collected through collaboration and consultation, the Ministry of Fisheries is working to further develop high risk areas worth protecting. The goal is to increase marine productivity through the establishment of carefully selected marine protected areas. This would ensure that fish stocks and associated bio-diversity is sustained throughout Fiji's fisheries waters.

As alluded to yesterday, Fish Wardens and strengthening of the important stakeholders is important. On the other hand, while our programmes are aimed at improving fisheries management, the Ministry is also developing strong policy and regulatory arrangements that will ensure the achievement of sustainable goals. Work is currently being done to develop the first ever National Fisheries Policy. This policy highlights important short and long-term goals which include the need for scientific data, legislative provision and the use of new technology to better understand how to manage fisheries resources.

Madam Speaker, during the last Parliament sitting, I had given a statement on the establishment of the new Inshore Fisheries Management Division. This Division has been established to address the current shortfall faced by the Ministry of Fisheries. While assessment has been done on the current gaps within coastal fisheries, the new Division will have a core role to address these gaps. This includes collection of data, development of standard reporting templates, establishment of enforcement standard operating procedures, and to conduct mandatory surface and land patrols for coastal fisheries.

Madam Speaker, with the assistance from the New Zealand Government, Fiji will mirror their activities that are more proactive, resource based, while decisions are made in a more holistic approach. Madam Speaker, to conclude, other important programmes include the development of management plans, legislative amendments and training programmes. These are all aimed at ensuring that strategic steps are taken to ensure sustainability of our coastal resources.

It is our hope that through these programmes, Fiji as a nation is able to continue to sustain our marine resources. This will ensure better livelihoods for our future generations. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- The question is, can the Honourable Minister inform the House why the Fish Warden Programme is so important?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the supplementary question. There are significant number of Fish Wardens who have been trained over the past two decades and have significantly contributed to Government's goal of ensuring sustainable coastal use of fishes for communities in Fiji. However, it is prudent to review the performances to ensure that we have an effective Fish Warden Team that are well supported by Government officials.

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Minister for highlighting all the steps that have been taken to protect and conserve various species of our fisheries resources. But can I ask the Minister when is he planning to provide us with some preliminary statistics and probably a report on the impact of all those strategies, especially Marine Protected Areas and moratorium accompanying with it before and after, whether there has been any impact and how those communities which actually depend on those Marine Protected Areas are benefitting or not? I think that report will be very useful and I am interested in hearing from the Minister when does he expect to present that to Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. It is a statistical question. I will be able to provide the data that he requires in the next week or so.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Dulakiverata?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Supplementary question. Madam Speaker, the resource owners, the *qoliqoli* owners depend on the inshore fishing areas for their sustenance and they are also affected by poaches. The question I would like to pose to the Honourable Minister is, what criteria do you use to issue licenses which also contribute to the over fishing of fish in these areas? In specific fishing areas – what criteria do you use? How many licenses do you issue in specific areas?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. The consultations that is being carried out now will establish these species within a fishing area to establish the stock within that and then work out what will be the license number that is to be issued to each specific area within Fiji. That is the consultative measure that is being carried out now.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Speaker, we hear about sustainability, regeneration and all that and the data in the system, but can we ask the Government to shift its focus to the economic valuation of its *qoliqoli*, there are 410 altogether in this country. I believe it will be useful in the programmes if the resource owners know the economic value of what they own. That, I believe, Madam Speaker, should be primary to the initiatives that are being undertaken by the Department of Fisheries. Can this be done, please?

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, the customary fishing right owners and the areas that are under their jurisdiction, there has to be a stocktake. Unfortunately, the concentration by Fiji has always been on offshore which is tuna, which brings in a lot of finance into Fiji. The establishment of the inshore fisheries will be able to establish that and we are working with the New Zealand Government to actually define the stock within the specific areas and be able to judge or put a monetary value on that stock.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, this Government has done nothing.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Nothing to protect the fishing right owners of their *qoliqoli* and it has been left to them to police their own areas. And it is still now interested in the *qoliqoli* owners only for the money because you want the money. You want some money for the Government but you forget their interest and now we have these fishing wardens. Can the Honourable Minister advise and explain to the House whether the Fishing Warden Programme is enough to police and protect in any owner's fishing ground?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member who comes into this Honourable House with a fishing line, he comes out to fish and give out questions that are quite irrelevant and totally absurd. Madam Speaker, I had stated in my answer yesterday that we are strengthening the fisheries sector where we empower the *qoliqoli* or the customary fishing right owners to conduct their own surveillance and then we will assist them in this respect. He comes into this House making all different kinds of quotations and allegations, he has not even done anything in his whole life.

(Laughter)

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

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- In regards to developments in the Ministry of Fisheries, what are some development initiatives that the Ministry's divisions pursue?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for his question. At the moment we are trying to encourage activities within the inshore and coastal fisheries like aquaculture. At the moment we will be holding a workshop, where we would like to encourage the landowners of areas that have been engulfed by salt water to produce shrimps, prawns and other fish species within Fiji. We will be holding a workshop next month where we will encourage all the people around Fiji to come and witness how they can develop these areas to productive use. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Last question, Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Ministry of Fisheries used to collect their data on the harvest, usually from the municipal markets. My question is, how reliable is the statistics on the harvesting of inshore fish because there are a lot of fish sold by the roadside and other places, apart from the regulated municipal markets, to be able to show that they are overfished in terms of harvest? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. This is a gap that we have been able to identify; the actual data that have not existed. Previously the data used to be collected by each division, but there was no central data within the Fisheries to collect the various data collected from the four divisions. We are now carrying out an exercise (as I had alluded to) with the New Zealand Government to try and collect all the data from the four Divisions and this will create an opportunity to have the information available to the Ministry of Fisheries.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will now move on to the Written Questions. I now call on the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua to ask his question.

#### Written Questions

Fees/Fines/Levies on Fiji Sports Council's Sports Facilities  
(Question No. 130/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports inform the House on the current status of the fees, fines and levies structure for all the Sports Facilities managed by the Fiji Sports Council?

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU (Minister for Youth and Sports).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. With your permission, I now table my answer.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you very much.

HON. SPEAKER.- I will now call on the Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa to ask her written question.

Update on the Four *TC Winston* Relief Collection Platforms  
(Question No. 131/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Acting Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs provide detailed accounts of the deposits and use of funds deposited in the four (4) *TC Winston* Relief Collection Platforms? These accounts are:

1. Prime Minister's National Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Trust Account;
2. Prime Minister's Disaster and Rehabilitation Trust Fund Account;
3. Disaster Preparedness Trust Account; and
4. Government Central Fund Account?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Acting Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the Honourable Leader of Opposition for her question. We will file the answers as provided for under the Standing Orders. Thank you.

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

1. Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services,
2. Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations, and
3. Honourable Minister for Waterways.

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

I now call upon the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services to deliver her Statement.

#### Update on the Meningococcal Outbreak

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to present my Ministerial Statement on the Meningococcal disease and the need for the House to be made more aware of the steps taken by the Ministry to move forward.

Madam Speaker, Meningococcal disease, if I may say, is found worldwide and results in sporadic cases and outbreaks. There is an estimated 1.2 million cases annually worldwide with deaths of around 135,000 people. The highest incidents occurs in the meningitis belt of sub-Saharan Africa which includes 26 countries stretching from Ethiopia in the East to Senegal in the West.

These countries, Madam Speaker, have frequent outbreaks in the dry season, mostly from December to June with incidents that can be as high as 1,000 cases per 100,000 population. This is compared to the rest of the world where incidents is between 0.3 to three cases per 100,000 per year. The World Health Organisation, Madam Speaker, reports that meningitis belt reports up to 30,000 cases of Meningococcal diseases every year.

Madam Speaker, closer to home, New Zealand had an outbreak of Meningococcal disease over about a 10-year period in the 1990s and early 2000. Case numbers went up from 53 in 1990 to 650 in 2001. The highest rates of illness were with the Pacific Islanders.

Madam Speaker, a vaccine against the Meningococcal B-strain causing the outbreak was introduced in 2004 and the incidents decreased to 2.6 per 100,000 population in 2007. Australia similarly had an increase in Meningococcal disease from 1997 to 2002 with notification going around 300 cases in 1996 to approximately 700 cases in 2002. This increase was driven by Meningococcal C-Strain and in 2003, the Australian Government introduced a vaccination programme for the Meningococcal C-strain. They used new conjugate vaccines called Meningococcal C that had been developed by the late 1990s. Madam Speaker, this vaccines stayed on the government funded immunisation schedule for all 12 month babies until 2018.

Invasive Meningococcal disease used to be very rare in Fiji. Prior to 2015, the annual incidence was consistently below one per 100,000, with a mean of 0.5 per 100,000 population. This is between 0-10 cases annually.

From the 4th quarter of 2016, Madam Speaker, to-date, there has been a significant increase in reported cases of Meningococcal disease with 29 cases in 2017. Our national incidence of Meningococcal disease was 5.9 per 100,000 and there were a total of seven deaths reported.

The 2017 case, Madam Speaker, included an institutional outbreak at St. Johns College in Cawaci. Seven cases were reported from January to June 2017, and up to two students getting sick within a month of the outbreak that was caused by the serogroup C-Strain.

Interventions by the Ministry of Health through visits to the St. Johns College by the subdivisional outbreak response team included; inspection of dormitories, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, information and education sessions and the provision of WASH facilities, including hand gels, soap and disinfectants.

Preventative antibiotics was also given to all students and in July, all students at St. Johns College were vaccinated. There were no cases from the school after vaccination.

Madam Speaker, I would like to clarify on a point here that we do not declare outbreaks overnight, normally as we have to study the disease pattern over a period of time. In 2017, we had declared a localised outbreak at St. Johns College. That was contained by the health team as soon as diagnosis or tests was done, results were confirmed, the students were vaccinated and todate as I have said, we have had no new cases from St. Johns College.

While we have been carrying out the necessary interventions, Madam Speaker, we have also been raising awareness and advising people that this disease is treatable and preventable, and that there is antibiotics which are available for free at the hospitals at the early stages, and that is still ongoing.

Madam Speaker, the term, 'Meningococcal' refers to any illness caused by this bacteria '*Neisseria*'. The illness caused by this bacterium forces the most devastating effects which are known as 'Invasive Meningococcal Disease' and they include; Meningitis, which is infection and inflammation of the lining of the brain and the spinal cord. Then we have Septicaemia, which is the infection of blood poison or blood poisoning. These are both severe diseases with high fatality rate.

The World Health Organisation reports that Meningococcal Meningitis is fatal in up to 50 percent of people, particularly if they do not receive treatment and the rate is higher for Septicaemia.

Madam Speaker, even with treatment the death rate is still 8 percent to 15 percent. People who are more at risk of getting the disease, include those who live in the same household or are intimate partners.

Madam Speaker, anyone can get Meningococcal disease. However, most cases are seen in babies, children under the age of five, teenagers and any young adults. While we do know the risk group, it is also important to understand how this disease is spread from person to person.

There are 13 sero groups of this bacteria – *Neisseria*, and six of these associated with diseases in humans. This bacteria only lives in humans and are found from time to time in 5 percent to 20 percent of the general population where the natural habitat of this bacteria is the back of our nose and throat, so we all carry that and this bacteria is passed from person to person through direct contact with respiratory secretions - saliva or spit, and this often happens with deep kissing on the mouth between infected people or intimate partners, but there is also an elevated risk with social activities involving the sharing of cups, water bottles, coughing or sneezing directly on another person by an infected person.

Madam Speaker, for the vast majority of people, having the bacteria at the back of their noses or mouth causes no problems, and most of them are not even unaware it is there. This disease occurs when the bacteria breaches the layers of the nasopharynx and moves into the bloodstream, as well as passes the barrier that separates the brain from the blood of an infected person.

The bacteria then enters the bloodstream with the infection itself. The risk of this happening, Madam Speaker, is higher in those with specific chronic illnesses that affect our immune system - smokers, and those with frequent upper respiratory tract infections.

Madam Speaker, on 20th March, 2018, the Ministry of Health and Medical Services declared a national outbreak of Meningococcal C. This was after a review of the evidences and recommendations by our group of experts on the National Meningococcal Taskforce.

There have been 46 cases from 1st January, 2018 to 12th April, 2018. Of these, 22 cases are laboratory confirmed, and 24 are either suspected or probable cases with similar symptoms but not diagnosed by the laboratory.

The Central Division, Madam Speaker, reported 27 cases, followed by Western Division of 16 cases, Eastern Division one case, and Northern Division two cases. There have been four confirmed Meningococcal disease-related deaths and two suspected from 1st January, 2018 to 12th April, 2018 unfortunately.

As of 12th April, 2018 all cases were in the age groups of below 19 years. Of this, male account for 63 percent, while female accounted for 37 percent, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry, upon recommendations of the National Taskforce, has a four-component strategy to combating any outbreak:

1. Enhanced surveillance and early case detection;
2. National surveillance coordinated by the Fiji Centre for Communicable Diseases Control (FCCDC);
3. Risk communication plans and implementation to ensure the general public is aware of the outbreak, focussing on early recognition of symptoms and early presentation to the health facility; and
4. Awareness for clinicians through distribution and training on new guidelines for the public health management of the disease.

Madam Speaker, in terms of early treatment, the actions taken is:

1. Review and national training for clinicians and outbreak response teams and in this case, the Meningococcal Disease Guidelines; and
2. Providing antibiotics, specifically for the treatment of the disease to all Health Subdivisions.

In terms of contact tracing, Madam Speaker, the team conducts active case investigation and tracing of close contacts of cases by outbreak response teams in the respective Divisions and Subdivisions.

In terms of prevention strategies, Madam Speaker, the Ministry has been:

1. communicating to the public on the need for basic hygiene measures needed to prevent the transmission of this bacteria;
2. working to strengthen infection prevention control among health care workers; and
3. planning and implementation of a targeted vaccination programme.

Madam Speaker, the response to this outbreak has been done with wide consultations with local and international experts, and follows international best practices in control for the outbreak.

Madam Speaker, the current case numbers of 2018 includes a cluster of cases reported from Navesau Adventist High School, a boarding school in the province of Ra in the Western Division. The first case was reported on 28th February, 2018 and so far there has been 10 cases as of 12th April, 2018, with the latest case reported on 9th April, 2018.



Since report of the first case at Navesau Adventist High School, Madam Speaker, the Nayavu Health Centre Team, the Tailevu Sub-divisional Team and the Central Division Team have made daily school visits where the following public health responses were undertaken:

- Discussions with the School Management on strategies for early detection, control and prevention of the disease in the school.
- We conducted health awareness and education for students, parents and teachers.
- We administered preventative antibiotics to all students and teachers.
- Inspected and assessed the school facilities and infrastructure.
- A vaccine campaign was conducted on 5th April, 2018 to 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 for all Navesau Adventist students using vaccines procured by the Ministry;
- Students were vaccinated with MENACTRA Conjugated Quadrivalent Vaccine that has the capacity to address four different Strains of Men-C ((A, C, Y, W-135).

Madam Speaker, in terms of transparency of the vaccination programme, the Ministry always seeks the endorsement or approval of parents as consenting to vaccination programme for their children. This consent, Madam Speaker, is given when parents understand the benefit and the value of the vaccine against the risks and cost of the burden of the disease.

The four different Strains, Madam Speaker, covered in the MENACTRA vaccine is a booster or extra protection against the other causative agents causing Meningococcal diseases. Of course, in this case, the predominant type was Strain-C.

The MENACTRA vaccine ensures protection against the disease for two to three years and at the same time, public health measures will continue to strengthen other measures in place.

Madam Speaker, we are working very closely with the WHO and UNICEF to ensure effective implementation of the vaccination programme that would allow 333,876 children aged between one year to nineteen years, being vaccinated as a strategic form of preventative measure against Meningococcal C Conjugate (Men-C). Of course someone asked a question, these vaccinations will be procured by the Ministry and the Government and provided for free to all between 1 year to 19 years old, that is the first phase.

The question is, why 1 to 19 years old? According to our current situation in Fiji as of 21st March this year, all cases were less than 19 years of age group with 41 percent of cases less than 5 years old, 21 percent between 5 years to 9 years old, 24 percent between 10 years to 14 years old and 15 percent aged 15 years to 19 years; that is our targeted group for the time being. Madam Speaker, these are the age groups being heavily affected by this disease.

Madam Speaker, if I may state, the vaccine is safe and effective and is recommended by WHO and this is the same vaccine that we gave to our students at St. John's College last year.

Madam Speaker, the vaccination for specific health staff is also being considered otherwise personal protective equipment and infection prevention control is used by all our staff when dealing with these cases.

Madam Speaker, if I could just inform the House about how we plan to conduct this vaccination. Like I said, the total number of people or children to be vaccinated in this mass vaccine is close to 333,876 between 12 months to 19. However, this vaccination campaign will be initially targeted at all medical sub-divisional offices in the Central Division, Western Division and the Northern Division according to our map classification.

Madam Speaker, the vaccination campaign will commence as soon as the vaccine arrives and will continue for six weeks. Due to the maritime travel challenges we have added an extra one week to conduct this drive in the maritime areas because we believe we will encounter some challenges taking the vaccine down to the maritime areas because of the cold chain storage issues. The service will also be available on Saturdays, Madam Speaker, and this is to help busy parents and caretakers to bring their children for this vaccination during the week break.

Considering the disease burden observation high risk group and operational effectiveness, the campaign roll out will start with intensive efforts in the Central Division first. Moreover, medical teams will be mobilised in all divisions to cover the whole targeted population as mentioned. Of particular attention, Madam Speaker, will be given to schools since there has been cases observed in boarding schools. Temporary fixed outreach immunisation post will cover almost all our schools.

If I can look at the mode or the method of delivery, Madam Speaker, we have permanent, fixed immunisation post and this is the services that will be provided by all our permanent health facilities and community health post for the whole day or the duration of the campaign. These sites will also serve as depot for storage and distributions of vaccine to temporary fixed sites and mobile teams.

Then we have the temporary to fix outreach immunisation post. This will be the schools et cetera, villages and settlements with small population may also be served through this temporary sites, immunisation will be provided at these sites for either the duration or the campaign or particularly depending on the population density. Of course we have mobile immunisation post which will move from community to community, reaching population that are living in hard to reach areas, which may not have access to these items maybe too small in size to justify.

So, we plan to have 53 teams Madam Speaker, including 8 people per team who will be mobilised around the country as temporary, fixed and mobile post service providers. Madam Speaker, so we will continue to work with our experts, we will continue work with our partners at WHO and UNICEF to ensure that we are able to procure. As mentioned yesterday the Government has already endorsed, a Cabinet Decision has already been endorsed to purchase this vaccination for our children and again if I may assure the House, this vaccination will come to our children between 1 to 19 and this will be of course be free of charge, no one will have to pay that, this is part of the Government's immunisation programme.

Madam Speaker, I was really dismayed and disappointed with some media articles and other posts especially if I can mention the releases from the National Federation Party side where it said that Ministry officials and Minister were sleeping on the job.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the team on the ground has been very active and this started from last year and I have explained the reason why the outbreak was not declared. This is to avoid fear and panic and I think it is the fear and the panic that made a lot of people to actually go and buy that vaccine from pharmacies which were quite expensive.

Again I appeal to the House and of course to the media as well, in cases like this, we need to respond very responsibly, we need to be very sensitive to situations like this because I believe after all we have the interest of our people at heart.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me time to present.

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

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to respond to the Ministerial Statement on Meningococcal Meningitis Virus in Fiji.

Allow me to begin by thanking the Honourable Minister for the update. Madam Speaker, there are five parts to my response:

- i) Define the Men-C;
- ii) Signs and symptoms of Men-C;
- iii) Risk mitigation and remedy to the virus;
- iv) Impact of such virus upon our country and an economy like Fiji; and
- v) Treatment of Men-C.

Madam Speaker, Meningococcal Meningitis or now commonly known as Men-C is a bacterial form of Meningitis by causing the swelling and inflammation of the membrane which is a serious infection of the thin lining that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. Meningococcal disease is a life threatening disease caused by the bacteria Neisseria Meningitis.

HON. MEMBER.- (Inaudible interjection)

HON. A.T. VADEI.- It can cause infections in both the brain and in the bloodstream. These conditions are very serious and can be deadly but can be treated if detected early.

Madam Speaker, talking about the transmission of Men-C, it can only infect humans. The bacteria are transmitted from person to person through the droplets of respiratory or throat secretions from the person who is infected. Smoking, close and prolonged contact such as sneezing or coughing or living in close contact with someone who is infected facilitates the spread of the disease.

The bacteria, Madam Speaker, can be carried in the throat and sometimes overwhelms the body's defences allowing the bacteria to spread through the bloodstream to the brain. It is believed that 1 percent to 10 percent of our population carries Neisseria Meningitis in their throat at any given time.

On the signs and symptoms of Men-C, Madam Speaker, the average incubation period is 4 days but it can range between 2 to 10 days. The most common symptoms are stiff neck, high fever, sensitivity to light, confusion, headaches and vomiting. Even when the disease is diagnosed early and adequate treatment is started, 8 percent to 15 percent of patients die, often within 24 to 48 hours after the onset of symptoms. If untreated, Meningococcal Meningitis is fatal in 50 percent of cases and may result in brain damage, hearing loss or disability in 10 percent to 20 percent of survivors.

Men-C is potentially fatal and should always be viewed as a medical emergency. Admission to a hospital or health centre is necessary. Isolation of the patient is not necessary. Appropriate antibiotic treatment must be started as soon as possible.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Point of order, Madam Speaker, this is not a response, this is a lecture. What we expect from this side is a response to the statement rather than a lecture on what has already been said by the Honourable Minister.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, you may call it a lecture but that is his response.

HON. MEMBER.- (Inaudible interjection)

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. He should be taught how to listen.

(Laughter)

Men-C is potentially fatal and should always be viewed as a medical emergency.

Madam Speaker, the impact of Men-C upon the Fijian economy would be disastrous. It would disease on our population, take a fatal toll on them, reduce productivity, increase the cost of our health budget and add to the miseries of our families. The virus will fear away tourists and investors and continue to harm our weak economy taking it further down the drain. It is time that this Government wakes up, take action and save Fiji from a disaster in the making. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I did give extra time because of the disruption. I now give the floor to the Honourable Parmod Chand to speak in response.

HON. P. CHAND.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for her Statement. We know from the Ministry of Health's Men-C Outbreak Situation Report, Volume 2, 5th April, 2018 that there are a total of 38 cases from 1st January to 5th April this year. The Ministry declared the outbreak on 20th March, 2018.

Madam Speaker, with such a sudden spike in numbers notwithstanding the Honourable Minister's claims yesterday about the need to study disease patterns, the real absurdity is that from 2016 where there was a confirmed outbreak by the Minister, her Ministry, not the doctors, not the nurses but her portfolio has been sitting on its hands in relation to Men-C. Madam Speaker, that is real absurdity. We were cautioned very strongly yesterday to stop the blame game.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, point of order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of order.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member is trying to mislead the House. There was no outbreak in 2016, there was a localised selected outbreak in 2017. Clarification!.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! That is not a point of order.

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Clarification.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Parmod Chand, please continue.

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Speaker, we were cautioned very strongly yesterday to stop the blame game. Well, I am sorry to advise the Minister, Madam Speaker, but that is why the people put us in this august House. They elected us to be here to represent them, to ensure that their best interests are being protected and if we have to blame, we will lay that squarely at the feet of those responsible. I would further like to caution the Minister that her comments yesterday about the creation of panic where she faults the media and the Opposition, once again the Honourable Minister must accept her own responsibility.

There have been no regular situation reports on the outbreak. There has been minimal risk communications under public health engagement on the new Men-C Public Health Management Guidelines. At the very least, this august House has not seen it, and in her very own words, “prevention is better than cure.” All that we are aware of is the availability of the Paediatric Intensive Care Clinical Centre Guideline for Men-C which is meaningless for the average citizen in this country.

Madam Speaker, I would urge the Minister to consider very strongly that data suppression on disease outbreaks be avoided because we are dealing with the health and the lives of our people. Additionally, can the Minister confirm if the Men-C type C is medication resistant? Later analysis indicates a new type C and medication may be antibiotic resistant.

I think the nation could avoid a great deal of unnecessary panic if the Ministry can publicly advise with statistical data if we have a new strain of Men-C given the large pool of cases in China. Further, we would need to understand how the Ministry plans to upskill our peripheral teams, general practitioners and how much we have progressed. As it appears, the delayed responses point to unclear procedures on prevention, screening and treatment.

Madam Speaker, does the Ministry have their population statistics desegregated; we can act on numbers and locations at risk. Vital statistics if not desegregated as in the 2017 Census data is not useful in health care. How prepared are the divisional teams and hospitals? Does the Ministry have enough staff, enough medication and support medication and intensive facilities to cope with an epidemic of this nature? Madam Speaker, data is very important. It is a very important part of nation building and governance.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are obsessed.

HON. P. CHAND.- We are not obsessed with anything. We are telling the truth and the truth hurts. So Madam Speaker, these are the pertinent questions that needs thorough explanations. I thank you, Madam Speaker, for this time but we understand data should not be hidden.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. At this point we will adjourn our proceedings for lunch.

Please, note that lunch is provided for the Honourable Members at the Big Committee Room. May I remind the Members of the House Committee of our meeting at the Small Committee Room.

Parliament will resume proceedings at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.26 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.33 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will resume from where we left off and I now call on the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations to deliver his Statement.

Update on the Work of the National Employment Centre

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I rise to provide an update on the work of the National Employment Centre (NEC) and my Ministry, in its work to try to create meaningful employment for Fijians here and abroad.

Madam Speaker, the Government established the NEC in 2010 to provide a quality one-stop employment-creation service in Fiji and to facilitate, coordinate and monitor national employment-creation policies, in both the formal and informal sectors. It is good to note that during the period of the Bainimarama-led Government and the current FijiFirst Government that we have seen two significant things have taken place. The first has been the unprecedented nine years of consecutive economic growth, which in turn has led to a substantive impact on unemployment in this country. There is a lot to talk about on the impact and the outcome of Government policies and I think these particular results show the results of everything that we have been doing.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Unprecedented.

HON. J. USAMATE.- ...unprecedented, consecutive economic growth which has led to unemployment drop.

In the 2010 and 2011 unemployment survey, we had the unemployment rate of 7.1 percent. The 2015 to 2016 unemployment survey showed a substantive drop from 7.1 percent to 5.5 percent. Now in the 2017 Census, we are now seeing the unemployment rate of 4.5 percent which is very low and good for our country.

Within the NEC, what we do is we register people that are unemployed and are given Life Skills Training which is designed to help them develop holistically so that they can become more disciplined and productive workers in our society.

From 2010 to 2018, Madam Speaker, a total of 12,250 clients of the NEC have undergone this training and clients are also given counselling and aptitude test to identify where their strengths are and once we understand what their aptitudes are, then they can be given the counselling that direct them in the kind of careers that they should undertake.

From 2010 to 2018, Madam Speaker, a total of 20,406 clients undertook this testing. In between 2017 and 2018, professional counselling and aptitude tests were given for almost 1,500 clients.

People that register with the NEC have also been given employment skills training. Formerly, we used to do that on our own as a Ministry but now we work in partnership with other agencies. Currently, my Ministry is facilitating this Employment Skills Training for these clients through the work of the Technical College of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, since the Centre started in 2010, there have been a lot of challenges that were faced. One of the most important assets of the NEC is the database that it has put in place, to capture the details and the number of people who are seeking employment.

One of the problems that we had was that, there were limitations in this database. The database could not give us the kind of reports and information that we required. There was a limitation in trying to match the demand of employers with the over-supply of low-skilled clients registered with the Centre.

We had a lot of people being registered with the Centre and their aptitudes and competencies did not meet the needs of the employers that were looking for people to employ. So that was a huge challenge that we have, the database and the mismatch between the qualities and competencies of people being registered on the database with the needs of employers.

The third problem faced by the Centre is trying to identify clients who have found permanent employment, so we would get a lot of people that register as “unemployed” and when they become employed, they do not inform the Centre so the database would have a huge number of people that were registered there as “unemployed” but who are in fact employed. So there was a need to clean up the database, have a system that automatically did this so that we could have that database to always be relevant and accurate at all times so that when employers ask for people with certain skillsets, we would go into this database and give them a list of people that were available and have the skillset and skill base that they needed.

The fourth big problem that we have is getting in touch with clients due to changes in their phone numbers and addresses. I have heard in this august House, Madam Speaker, over the past few sessions where people have talked about figures like 52,000 unemployed people registered in our database.

One of the reasons that that number was inflated is because there had been no proper system to take out those that had been employed but had not been removed from the database. This has led us to revise that NEC database, to make it more relevant, accurate, have it cleaned and fixed so that it becomes more user-friendly for employers that are looking for employees from NEC. The cleaning of this NEC database was done over a number of months and I can gladly say that at the end of this exercise, we now have a better reflection of the people that were in that original number that are really unemployed.

From the initial almost 57,000 registered clients we now have as unemployed, now the number has dropped down to around 8,700. They have looked at all those that were employed, taken them out, students, et cetera, so the number that is left is around 8,700. These are the clients who are currently registered with us and who we know are really unemployed at this time so the focus now will be to see how we can work on assisting that group of people get the employment that they need. The clean-up exercise was thorough and it involved calling each of these 57,000 clients and getting them to come to the Centre to update their details and records.

Moving forward, we now keep records of clients for two years however, if their records are more than two years old, these are not totally removed from the system but they are put offline. When they are needed, they can be pulled back into the system so we can get more details of those that were registered with us in the past.

One of the things that we are focusing very strongly, Madam Speaker, in terms of the work of the NEC, is not just to rely on our own effort but to collaborate with others. This is one of the reasons that we sign the Memorandum of Agreement with the Technical Colleges of Fiji for Employment Skills Training.

As you are well aware, Government has given assistance to the Technical Colleges and they are also providing certificate qualifications in a range of different trades and competencies. People that come and register with the NEC who do not have these skills or qualifications, they are encouraged or are assisted to join the programmes at the Technical Colleges.

There are, of course, people who are registered at the NEC that already have diplomas, certificates or degrees. These ones we can just give them the Life Skills Training and help them to find employment.

In 2016, a total of 35 students graduated from the Technical Colleges and in 2017, a total of 155 students were enrolled under the arrangement.

Last month, we have also strengthened our collaboration with the Fiji National Provident Fund through a Memorandum of Understanding. Through this collaboration, it will give us access to information from FNPF so that we will know who the NEC clients are that have joined the workforce and are now registered with FNPF. We know that it is a requirement in FNPF that within one month from the time you join the workforce, you have to become a member of FNPF and if you have access to the NEC registration numbers of those that have joined FNPF, we can take their names, details and update our own NEC database, so that we always know who is employed, who is unemployed within the database that we have at the NEC.

We have also signed the Memorandum of Understanding with our Fiji National University. The intent, of course, is to undertake research on labour market information so that we can use the data that we already have in the NEC database to give us insight into policy-formulation and decision-making for the future.

The Centre also assists clients that visit the Centre in writing their Curriculum Vitae (CVs), how to write application letters, how to present themselves for interviews, communication skills and how to answer interview questions. All of these services are designed to help people search and look for the kinds of jobs that they need.

One other additional development that has taken place now, in the past when people are registered with NEC, we used to give them bits and pieces of paper that noted down their name and what their registration number is with the National Employment Centre, so that they can quote this number when they join FNPF, et cetera. Now, we have changed that system so that we are giving them registration cards because pieces of papers can very easily mislead. They can get lost, people forget about them, if it is left in the shirt pocket, the shirt gets washed and everything on that piece of paper disappears. The former practice of paper identification has now been replaced by the cards.

Finally, a very important work that is currently being done at the NEC, Madam Speaker, is work placement. In terms of local employment, we collaborate with local employers. In Fiji right now, we have around 10,000 employers and we try to get in touch with them to see how we can get the people that are registered with NEC attached or given six months attachment in the workplaces so they can learn what it is to actually work in a workplace. Once we have these MOUs in place, our clients are then placed in local organisations for hands-on work experience and to learn basic work ethics before getting any permanent employment.

To-date, the Centre has signed a total of 523 MOUs with employers. If there are employers listening, we hope that more employers will be able to come on board so we can place more of our young people that are looking for jobs into their workplaces so that they can get their six-month attachments. On completing the six-month employment attachment, employees have been absorbed into permanent employment for both skilled and unskilled workers.

From my records, from 2010 to 2018, a total of around 7,676 of our clients were absorbed into permanent employment. These are the ones that we are aware of. While on work attachment, the employer and the Centre share the cost of the weekly allowance of the clients to help with their daily transport costs and meals. So that is something that is available, especially for small businesses, as they have access to this group of people.



The National Employment Centre is also increasing awareness to local employers to assist registered unemployed Fijians on work attachment and permanent employment. We have organised Employer Forums around the country to get input from employers on the areas of skill demand that they need and also input on how we need to improve the work and the service of the National Employment Centre.

We have had the Training Institution Forums where we sat with Institution Forums to identify the trainees that we have for industries so that we can work better with them in supplying that particular need.

Madam Speaker, over the past few sessions we also talked about the importance of the Forum Employment Programme and at the moment, the Forum Employment Services and the key programme that is taking place now is the Seasonal Worker Programme that we are doing for Australia and New Zealand. Now we are moving into a phase where we are trying to recruit people from rural and maritime areas. In doing this, we work very closely with the Provincial Offices and also with the Rural Advisory Councils to select the kind of people from each of the settlements that are most likely to do well in the work that is required from Australia and New Zealand.

We are trying to distribute the benefits equally across all rural and maritime areas in Fiji and as a prerequisite, we require all clients to have no previous immigration or police records, they must be able to pass the fitness test and also the medical assessments. With this community base recruitment, we have seen marked improvement in the reputation of our workers.

Earlier this year, I went to Australia and New Zealand and I was able to get that feedback from the farmers that we have met. We still now have in place our policy whereby a village or community is placed on a four-year ban should one of its members absconds or commits a serious offence whilst on seasonal work. Why do we do this? Because we need to uphold the reputation of the Fijian worker. We have 1,500 people waiting in the wings who want to go. So if the people that do go may have a good impression, there will be more doors opened for our people. But if the people that do go do not do the work properly, the reputation of the Fijian product declines and as a result, farmers and employers will look to other countries to get their numbers up.

Madam Speaker, in terms of working conditions for seasonal workers, we are working with the Department of Jobs and Small Business in Australia and the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment in New Zealand to looking at client contracts to be able to continually enhance the conditions of work that they have.

Since 2015, almost a 1,300 workers have taken part in the programme. We now send workers to 10 employers in Australia and 23 employers in New Zealand. Currently, as of today, this year we have already sent 225 workers to New Zealand; that is the number which is equivalent of the number that we had for the whole year in 2016.

For Australia, so far we have sent 56, there is another 100 to go; for New Zealand, another 70 will be going to work that we know are already destined to be going for the rest of the year.

Many workers when they first return they build new homes, improve their existing homes, start small business, buy some livestock, improve their farms, buy small agricultural equipment so these things are having a direct impact on their livelihoods and the lives of their families. We are now into the fourth year of the programme and we are competing with other labour-sending countries like Vanuatu, Samoa and Tonga who have been in the programme for more than 10 years.

One of the reasons that we notice for the success of those countries, Vanuatu for instance, sends 4,000 workers to New Zealand and almost 2,000 to Australia.

One of the reasons that they have such numbers is because they got into the game early. Secondly, because they have liaison officers on the ground who visit the employers and do pastoral work, so that is something that we will also be doing this season. We are looking at putting liaison officers on the ground to do that pastoral work.

We have sent workers to other parts of the world before. We have sent them to the United Arab Emirates in the fields of transport, livestock, carpentry and tourism. But always as we look at sending people offshore, we keep the needs of our local industries in mind. We do not want to be sending a lot of our skilled workers offshore and find that we have gaps in our own system. We know that there are shortages and skills in a whole range of different areas in our country. There are opportunities for areas like age care and giving of care and that is something that we will be focusing on into the near future.

Madam Speaker, the third service that we have been providing under the National Employment Centre is the Fiji Volunteer Services. Since 2012, we have sent 120 retirees to the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Vanuatu and Tuvalu with retired teachers expected to leave for Kiribati later this month. These retired people assist in the development of these countries and recently in Tuvalu in the health sector. These retired teachers have put their mark in the regional countries so the improvement of student learning and assisting with community projects including faith-based activities.

Reports received from Tuvalu, Madam Speaker, showed that previously expecting mothers used to travel to Fiji to deliver their babies but now with the engagement of our experience retired nurses in that country, the option of delivering at the Princess Margaret Hospital is now a real option that more are taking use of. With this type of success stories, the Government of Tuvalu has shown interest in the engagement of paramedics, other fields and types of people in the health sector.

Madam Speaker, in terms of self-employment where we assist people to start their own business, something that the Ministry was involved in but over the past few years there has been a rationalisation of this, so the Ministry is working very closely with the work that is undertaken by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism which is providing the Small Business Grants of \$1,000 towards their micro and small business ventures through which they have also begun the Young Entrepreneurship Scheme for people between the age of 18 to 30.

We have also been working very closely with the National Centre for Small and Micro Enterprises Development (NCSMED) and we know in the future the development of entrepreneurship and people are not just going to the university for the sake of looking for jobs but becoming job creators in their own right, is something that will become much more important for the future of our country.

In the National Employment Centre, the big thrust that we are having right now is the development of our National Employment Policy that we are currently finalising after public consultations around the country. Those consultations have been concluded and now the policy is well-aligned to our National Development Plan and the next stage will be to take it up to Cabinet.

Madam Speaker, through the National Employment Centre, we are creating networks with other agencies and negotiating on labour mobility through existing frameworks to allow our unemployed graduates to get sustainable employment, also young graduates are encouraged to pursue entrepreneurship opportunities and utilise the resources and programmes available to create employment.

Government as a whole has been having a focus on enhancing livelihoods and this has been seen in all the programmes that we have in terms of focus on infrastructure development to provide that infrastructure so that people can have access to markets, power and water, communications and transport so that they can remain where they are living, out in the islands, et cetera, but produce crops and provide services can be made available to where the demand is and the demand, of course, is on Viti Levu.

There is a whole focus on that, they have a strong focus on helping people that are in the informal sector because we know our labour force is basically a number of around 360,000, two-thirds of these are in the informal and subsistence economy. So, rather than just focus on those that are in the formal sector, there is a strong focus also that those who are in the informal sector coming up with programmes so that they have access to income so that they can enhance the quality of their lives wherever they are in Fiji.

My Ministry is implementing a holistic approach in addressing unemployment and growing employment in Fiji and we are vigorously pursuing programmes aimed that reducing unemployment. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the Ministerial Statement by the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations on updating this august House on the work of the National Employment Centre.

The idea of an Employment Centre, Madam Speaker, and the National Volunteer Scheme have been around in Fiji for quite a number of years, like this Government, every other government before it has sought to play a meaningful role to realise this vision for our youth and our nation.

I must thank each and every individual and organisation who have been part of this process to enable us to reach this far while we still have miles to go and require the passion that our predecessors had in resolving youth and employment issues in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, this morning, the Honourable Attorney-General attempted to put a spirited fight for the youth of Fiji saying that the Opposition has no respect for our youth and does not want to be part of the decision-making process. We refute and deplore those remarks. I must set the record straight here and now that the Opposition stands for the voice of the youths of Fiji.

We fully encourage and support our youth in the decision-making process and welcome their intervention. Let there be no doubt about it and I must go a step further and say that this Government will be shell-shocked with the verdict of our youth come the National Elections 2018.

The issue of employment, Madam Speaker, is an ongoing challenge which cannot and should not be addressed in isolation. I say this because we are part of the global market. In that regard, Madam Speaker, it is important that our employment policies and programmes should be made, keeping in mind the following:

- Global labour trends and report of the ILO on these trends;
- Movement of internal and external labour force;
- Requirements of the domestic, regional and international labour markets and labour needs;
- Availability of resources to train and develop suitably qualified human resources to meet the domestic, regional and international labour needs; and
- Adding human capital as an important element of development of the national economy and translating the same as means of wealth and strength for the nation.

Now, Madam Speaker, there is a National Employment Centre Decree in place which falls short of these expectations and therefore it needs a review by way of tripartite approach to make it acceptable, relevant and feasible to address the issue of employment in the global and holistic context, rather than on an ad-hoc basis to bridge the gap from the day a student leaves school to the day he or she finds

employment. The Opposition calls for a national debate on this matter and we will be happy to debate it out come the Election later this year.

It is quite ironical, Madam Speaker, that whilst we send our people overseas yet we allow foreign workers to come and work in Fiji. Why are we doing this? Is this is a holistic approach that the Government is advocating?

Madam Speaker, the next matter on which I intend to speak about is the availability of information under this Government. We are living in an information age and we need statistics from state agencies by way of periodic reports on the progress of the number of cases registered, dealt with and pending with NEC. Right now, what we have in the form of information is on hearsay basis, in the form of this Ministerial Statement, a report that itself casts doubt on its accuracy.

Madam Speaker, eight Employment Regulations have not been gazetted and even the position of the Director of the National Employment Centre has not been filled. Is this unprecedented in terms of administration?

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, the Opposition is of the strong view for the review of the National Employment Centre Decree by way of a tripartite approach. We cannot and should not accept to live in isolation and seek remedy and redress on our labour issues but rather lay down the foundation for grooming our citizens to find their place in the regional and international market. We do so because our own economic base is very narrow and fragile and keeping in mind that an average of about \$720 million of foreign receipts by way of our people living and working overseas and adding value to the national economy. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Madam Speaker, I worry about the constant obsession with the consecutive growth that we have had in this country over the last several years. We believe and I have pointed out this many times that the average growth over the last 10 years or 12 years, under this Government and the Bainimarama Government, has been very poor.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Also, Madam Speaker, when you look at the unemployment figures, 4 from 7.1 percent to 5.5 percent then down to 4.5 percent, I actually do not trust these figures. These are not what is reflected on the ground. But even if we, for argument's sake, Madam Speaker, if we accept this unemployment figure of 4.5 percent, then if you look at the poverty rate (that is Government's own figure of 28 percent) and if one were to assume that the same proportion would come from different sectors where it would normally expect those in poverty to come from, Madam Speaker, then one could assume that about 24 percent to 25 percent of the people who are in poverty are actually in employment. The Government's responsibility anyway in any country is to provide more employment to lift people out of poverty, whereas it seems that this Government has a policy of keeping people into a low wage economy and keeping them in poverty, so that is one side of the story.

The other point that the Honourable Minister made was with respect to the seasonal workers. I mean, that is commendable, we accept that we need to send our people because we have issues here in our own country. But, Madam Speaker, I would challenge the Honourable Minister, at some point in

time, to produce a report, look at the social and economic impacts of us sending our people to Seasonal Worker Schemes, sending our retirees.

Again, Madam Speaker, on the seasonal workers, the physique requirement, in our view and I had pointed this out before, is actually quite discriminatory and the Honourable Minister ought to look at those policies in the recruitment of seasonal workers.

The final point I want to make is with respect to the National Employment Centre Act. I think the Honourable Minister needs to come out very clearly and in more detail than what he has done, is to let us know what is happening with those strategic partnerships the amended Act allowed. I know you talked about partnership with the FNPF, we would like to know about a partnership with financial and donor agencies, with civil society organisations and religious institutions, partnerships between national, regional or international information communication technology organisations, and we would also want to know the strategic partnership with international and regional institutions dealing with disability matters, for the purpose of capacity building and financing of disability projects, including the absorption of persons with disabilities into employment and small and micro enterprise development.

I think the Honourable Minister ought to do better when he talks about the NEC next time, he needs to talk about those strategic partnerships. We want to see evidence of those partnerships and how those partnerships are actually working in creating more jobs and the confidence in the economy for those unemployed.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, there are strategic partnerships in the Act which talks about between different Ministries and the Honourable Minister has not really touched on that - the partnership with the *iTaukei* Land Trust Board, the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs, the Ministry of Provincial Development and *mataqali* landowners for the purpose of capacity building, cost-sharing and relocation of a person back to the rural areas. These are all provided for in the Act.

I am surprised that the Honourable Minister actually ignored his emphasis on those strategic partnerships and how those partnerships in medium to long term, are going to create and effective synergy and allow that space for our unemployed to actually put themselves in a space where they can get meaningful and decent employment, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Minister for Waterways to deliver his Statement.

#### Surface Water Assessment and Management in Fiji

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Acting Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament, it is an honour to present this Statement on Surface Water Assessment and Management in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, water is renewable yet, finite resource and effective management of water quantity and quality is a priority for this Government. Water is vital to our economic development, human dignity and the Fijian way of life.

Madam Speaker, water connects public health, food security, sustainable cities, energy, and climate change. The Sustainable Development Goals make clear, the world needs to transform the way it manages its water resources.

Madam Speaker, there is increased pressure on water resources and immediate action is urgent. Increasing water-intensive patterns of growth, increasing rainfall variability, population and pollution are

combining to make water one of the largest and greatest risks to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Madam Speaker, floods and droughts already impose huge social and economic costs around the world and Fiji, and climate variability will make water extremes worse. If the world continues on its current path, projections suggest that the world may face a 40 percent shortfall in water availability by 2030.

Madam Speaker, around the world, people's livelihoods are being threatened because of too little water, too much water, or a lack of high-quality water and the recent floods in Fiji depicts this reality in our interconnected world. In fact, a new report by the WHO and UNICEF points out, that 2.1 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water. That is, three in ten people worldwide. It is time to act and turn off our denial of global water crisis, turn off the destruction of our waterways and watershed and turn off our actions that compromise sustainability of our water resources and turn on our management actions.

Madam Speaker, water management is at the core of recent milestone agreements, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Madam Speaker, while we love our water bodies, not everyone understands the importance of acting now to manage them sustainably. Water plays a central role in almost all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The recent COP23 which our Honourable Prime Minister proudly chaired and the Paris Agreement was a major breakthrough in establishing the importance of climate resilience. For the first time in global climate talks, adaptation was given the recognition it deserves. Madam Speaker, 90% of climate adaptation is about water, and this further stresses the importance of good water management.

Madam Speaker, the Water Action Decade (2018-2028) was launched on 22nd March, 2018 at United Nations Headquarters in New York to help put a greater focus on water management for the next 10 years, and to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Madam Speaker, climate change, one of the greatest challenges of our time, is accelerating catastrophic water events at unprecedented rates. The increased intensity of hydro-meteorological events are examples of the impacts of climate change. Madam Speaker, research indicates increased rainfall variability and increased in the intensity of storm events in Fiji (the extreme climate events) have caused great societal and environmental change.

Madam Speaker, according to Aquastat, a statistical database managed by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Fiji's total renewable surface water resources are estimated at around 28,550 million cubic metres per year and the total renewable groundwater resources are estimated at about 5,273 million cubic metres per year.

Madam Speaker, surface water is the main source of potable water in all major towns of Fiji, hence its importance to our nation's wellbeing and the economy. Therefore, to secure livelihoods, it is time now that we assess and manage our water resources, including surface water and waterways and develop critical understanding of our water resources and the associated hydrological processes.

Madam Speaker, surface water refers to water that flows on our waterways, including river, lake, wetland or ocean. Surface water accounts for majority of our drinking water and national water needs,

therefore, management of our watersheds and associated water bodies, including surface water assessment are paramount.

Madam Speaker, the direct and indirect effects of lack of understanding of our waterways, hydrological dynamics of river and associated hydrological events have been felt throughout our economy. Therefore, it is vital that we now venture into watershed planning, waterways monitoring and planning, and carrying out technical analysis of our watersheds and related conveyance systems.

Madam Speaker, all along up till now, we have been talking about downstream reactive actions. Water resources can be neither developed nor managed rationally without an assessment of the quantity and quality of water available. Madam Speaker, as the old saying goes, “You can't manage what you don't measure.”

Madam Speaker, Water Resources Assessment (WRA) is required to assess our water resources. WRA is a tool to evaluate water resources in relation to a reference frame, including evaluation of the dynamics of the water resource in relation to human impacts and demand.

Madam Speaker, while in Fiji, we have not had a comprehensive national surface water assessment, components of water resources assessment, for example, hydrological monitoring, has been carried out at some locations. The hydrological monitoring and assessment commenced in Fiji in the early 1970s in response to the need for hydrological data required for the design of the Monasavu Hydro Electric Scheme.

The hydrological monitoring and assessment commenced in Fiji in the early 1970s in response to the need for hydrological data required for the design of the Monasavu Hydro Electricity Scheme. The hydrological monitoring network was established under development aid assistance and capacity was developed within a suitable Government department.

Madam Speaker, while it is not always possible to predict the severity of floods and droughts, we still can do a lot to improve our understanding of our water resources and anticipate extreme events. This certainly will allow us to reduce our exposure to extreme events and provide data that will help us design better infrastructure, devise more accurate and responsive early warning systems, and plan our developments.

Madam Speaker, it is well said that “forewarned is forearmed.” Having reliable long term hydrological data can help us prepare and plan for extreme events by identifying where the risks are highest and planning accordingly to minimise the risks. High quality hydrological data will allow us to hydrological model and investigate potential impacts from natural or man-made changes in our catchments, rivers, streams and groundwater systems. A well gauged catchment is key to establish rainfall-runoff relation in the catchment.

Madam Speaker, Fiji Meteorological Services currently maintains a total of 98 operating hydrological and telemetered rainfall stations throughout Fiji. These include; 68 telemetered rainfall stations and 30 water level stations. There are 30 telemetered rainfall stations in Western Division, 15 in the Northern Division, 15 in the Central Division, seven in the Eastern Division and one in Rotuma. Furthermore, there are approximately 64 manual rain-gauge stations which are maintained by Fiji Meteorological Services. Madam Speaker, five more telemetry stations will be installed this year at Bagata in Vanua Levu, Korovou Town, Navala in Ba and Lautoka.

Madam Speaker, there are some long term rainfall and water level time series data available at the Fiji Meteorological Services for some of our catchments. Time series data are very rare in Fiji and fortunately, research institutions like universities, research stations of agriculture or the Fiji Sugar

Corporation, et cetera, have not collected primary time series data. It is very rare and if you want to do solid research work, we will need to not only rely on secondary time series data, we should also collect primary time series data.

Madam Speaker, we need to entice our universities and researchers to use these data, whatever is available, start establishing time series data, carry out further research and help us understand our catchment process in more detail. There is a need for further research and analysis to understand the trends in rainfall and surface water flows in Fiji.

Furthermore, research is needed to ascertain trends in occurrence of extreme rainfall and flood events during the last few decades. We also need to establish relationship between rainfall events and flood inundation areas in our respective catchments. One of the things about flood, Madam Speaker, of all the natural disasters is that we know what are the flood-prone areas, therefore, it gives us better understanding in terms of going and doing primary research in this area.

Madam Speaker, our nation faced one of worst flood disasters in the Easter weekend. Floods continue to cause tremendous damage to communities, and people's lives and livelihoods are regularly lost. There are damages to infrastructure and crops, reduced productivity, impacts to schools and hospitals. All have an enormous cost on communities and can set back a nation's economic development. Accurate, reliable and accessible hydrological data cannot necessarily stop floods, however, it can provide timely early warnings and be used to reduce the impacts.

Madam Speaker, the Easter floods have really struck communities while we were still picking up from *TC Winston*. It is rather unfortunate that our people had to go through such hardship and my sympathies are with the families who have been affected. There has been a lot said about the causes of flood and some of standout causes suggested by people are silted rivers and improper drainage.

Madam Speaker, it is important to note that rivers and drains are mere part of the hydrological conveyance system and there is more to floods than rivers and drains. This is what I have been harping on from the last two Statements I gave, in response to some of the questions given out today. All along this, of course, have been about downstream, dredging, de-silting and drainage. That is part of the entire hydrological conveyance system which starts from upstream.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- That is upstream.

Madam Speaker, to put things into perspective, let me provide some facts about the rainfall intensity over the Easter weekend and I want Honourable Members to get this data. Over the Easter weekend, the 478 millimetres of rain was recorded at the Vaturu Station. Moreover, on 31st March and 1st April, 297 millimetres and 105.5 millimetres of rainfall was recorded respectively.

Madam Speaker, noting this data, the long-term average rainfall for April at the Vaturu Station is 511 millimetres. So what this means is, that 93 percent of the total monthly rainfall fell during that four-day period. On an average, the total monthly rainfall, the last decades average monthly rainfall, 93 percent fell over those four days and that demonstrated the sheer volume of water that had to be catered through the waterways has come down to downstream places.

Madam Speaker, it is important to understand because all along, they have been harping about the drainage system et cetera but they fail to realise that climate is changing. There is a major climate change occurring and that is the reality and that has resulted in massive amount of water that never ever was recorded before on those four days.



Madam Speaker, such high intensity of events cause failure or overtopping of our conveyance system. Someone was just talking about the downstream, they need to talk about how our entire conveyance system has been compromised because of this sudden change in the climate condition and the weather on those days.

Madam Speaker, the water level at Vaturu Station also hiked during this period, the interest revelation and more needs to be found out about that, the highest recorded water level was 15.18 metres above the reference at 9 a.m. on 1st April. This marked a sudden increase of 1.18 metres of water at Vaturu Lake, with most of the water released from the dam by 1.00 p.m. on the same day.

Madam Speaker, Vaturu Dam has a catchment area of 38 kilometres squared and the catchment area for Nadi is 550 kilometres squared. One can imagine the amount of runoff these catchments could provide. Moreover, the terrain and steep slope in the catchment as well as catchment activities further exacerbated the runoff from these catchments after high intensity rainfall. While rainfall variability has increased drastically in last 2 decades, we have not done much to adapt to this variability.

For the last two to three decades, we have been noticing if they had been examining the data by the Meteorological Department, unfortunately while they have this data, , nothing was done over the last three decades to match up to the vulnerability in climate change. Now, suddenly everyone is talking about climate change.

Madam Speaker, in addition to the Fiji Meteorological Service, rainfall data is also collected in Fiji by a number of other agencies, including;

1. Water Authority of Fiji;
2. Fiji Electricity Authority (now Energy Fiji Limited); and
3. tourist resorts and private resort developers.

Madam Speaker, while this data appears to be quite substantial, it is unfortunate that it has not been possible to source and integrate this data into a national database that could be supported by all agencies and stakeholders. That is something we are looking at without duplicating, we want to establish a strategically arm in Ministry of Waterways and work very closely with these institutions and ensure that we match the data, remove any duplication, remove any variations and have one data so that we can speak one language. We will make this data available to all whether it is Government, NGOs, research institutions or universities. They can come and use it and help us in policy making.

Madam Speaker, there is a need to predict extreme rainfall events and provide timely analysis of rainfall events for development purposes. I understand rare rainfall events are important, so that infrastructure like levees, dams and bridges can be built to help keep communities safe.

Madam Speaker, while the Meteorological Office is doing an excellent job in weather and flood forecasting, the surface water assessment is outside its mandate and hence has been never carried out by any entity in Fiji, except for the backup analogue help computation done by FAO as published in the FAO statistics database. The truth is, Madam Speaker, that we have very less data on our river flows and quantity of surface water and we have very little understanding of the hydraulics of our rivers.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, we need to understand the flow dynamics in our rivers, we need to assess the peak flows and analyse extreme low and high flow events. There is an urgent need to understand the lag time in our major rivers. Such analysis together with river engineering will help us mitigate the impacts of future flood levels. In fact what I am saying, Madam Speaker, for every river, we need to examine the volume of water, the capacity and what is the potential for the water to rise. All these analysis needs to be done for river ways, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the larger rivers in Fiji are generally monitored by hydrological stations where flood flows commonly exceed several thousand cubic metres per second. However, due to limited recurrent support for field operations and capacity issues accurate flood data in Fiji is limited.

Madam Speaker, research indicates that approximately every three years, a notable damaging flood can be expected at any one time or more of river systems in Fiji. However, due to reduce hydrological capacity and limited resources precludes any actual flood measurements to determine actual system discharge at its peak.

Madam Speaker, I would like to reiterate the following sentiments shared by the High Level Panel on Water:

- Water is everyone's responsibility. A whole Government approach is required to better manage our water resources and deliver water and sanitation services. Similarly, households, farmers and private sector are the major users of water and therefore have the responsibility of water stewardship as well.
- Access to water is everyone's right and therefore bridging access gaps is everyone's responsibility.
- Valuing our water right. Valuing the water we have becomes ever more important as its scarcity increases.
- Investing in water for the long run. The water sector has suffered from insufficient financing and investment.

Madam Speaker, again I would like to thank the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister for Economy for their vision to address water management in Fiji by establishing the Ministry of Waterways. As alluded to in the morning, Madam Speaker, the small States in the Caribbean Region, Madam Speaker, and our own Pacific Island countries are now also talking about establishing dedicated Ministry of Waterways, given the importance of water in the smaller island countries.

The Ministry of Waterways will endeavour to address national water management problem by addressing cross sectional interest in water, watershed management and employing participatory integrated approaches in water resource planning, development in water management in Fiji. Furthermore, the Ministry will lay a foundation process that it will use and develop of water resources, protection of their ecosystem and the environment in which water resources are situated and assist the integration of water resource management with other natural resource management.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. *Vinaka*.

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

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise to respond to the Ministerial Statement on the newly formed amongst other issues the management of our watersheds and assessment of the surface water. May I begin, Madam Speaker, by thanking the Honourable Minister for his presentation.

Madam Speaker, what the people of Fiji need is a speedy solution and improvement to the water woes that continually beset us. The Honourable Minister has say that water is vital to our human dignity,

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) deals with the importance of the water and water is central to our existence. Now, what Government did in regards to all these, Madam Speaker, was to do the unthinkable by privatising the supply of water which is the basic need for all of us. They have removed the CEO of the Water Authority of Fiji whom they themselves brought in. They are now blaming the drivers of the water trucks for not delivering water at the right time and at the right place.

Madam Speaker, when PWD at the height of natural disasters, whilst operating on a smaller budget, they were very good. They would provide water tanks to villages, settlements and schools and they would come in, fill up the water tanks in these areas and people came in with their buckets to fill up from the water tanks and that is what the PWD did and we had very little complaints about them. So, what the country needs, Madam Speaker, is to deliver on promises, it is not just hollow words and collating data which you should do Honourable Minister for the past 30 years, which you tell us has not been done because that is very important to the exercise that you are telling us about.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- Last 12 years you have not done. We envisage that with establishment of the new Ministry of Waterways that water issues would improve, Madam Speaker. In that regard, our good wishes are with the Honourable Minister for Waterways to succeed in his noble endeavours.

Madam Speaker, the importance of the management of our watersheds and the need for the proper assessment of surface water and its management can be drawn home by three important issues on which I intend to speak on.

First is the water disruptions in our major towns and cities. Secondly, the lack of water supply to our rural areas and thirdly, the contingency water supply to remote islands in the cases of drought. I agree with the Honourable Parmod Chand that the Labasa central area which is one of the most densely populated areas in Vanua Levu experiences regular water cuts which has found its way to the social media after the mainstream media failed to report it.

In the Suva City, Madam Speaker ....

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. RO T.V. KEPÄ.- That was *Fiji Sun*.

In Suva City, the water supply issue has grown to such proportions that we have had work and school disturbances and the closure of strategic Government offices such as the Parliament office and Judiciary. A majority of the Honourable Members who are here today live and work in Suva and I think hardly anyone can beg to differ from the statement of fact. In the greater Suva area, Madam Speaker, the delayed and prolonged development of the widening of the Suva/Nausori Highway has been a major bone of contention disrupting water supply to areas such as Samabula, Laucala, Tamavua, Cunningham and Nasinu.

These are amongst the most heavily and densely populated areas of Fiji, Madam Speaker. In the Nausori, Tailevu, Naitasiri and Rewa areas, I have to come to this, Madam Speaker, there is an urgent need to investigate the operations of the Sawani and Waila Water Plants given the low-lying areas such as Lokia, Koronivia, Vuci, Raralevu, Wainibokasi and the Nausori Town areas which now suffer from regular water cuts. The plight of the residents in Lakena and Buiduna Hills has not improved either, Madam Speaker.

In Rewa and other rural areas, people have to regularly bath and wash in the rivers which is not conducive, Madam Speaker, to a healthy lifestyle. This is just not acceptable. The Honourable Minister has said about the high rainfall over the Vaturu Dam in the West, Madam Speaker, which supplies water to the Nadi and the Lautoka areas and this also includes Nadi International Airport, Vuda Point Terminal, Lautoka City which is the capital of the Western Division and Nadi.

Last year, Madam Speaker, the growth of algae which has gone undetected was a major and shocking issue and I must thank the Honourable Viliame Gavoka for highlighting this matter and I hope that the Honourable Minister will be able to look at that issue. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I call upon the Leader of the NFP or his designate.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. Madam Speaker, I always find the Honourable Minister's statement, I have to brace myself for something new and this time around his Ministerial Statement has been an ad hoc science lesson, which just trickles down to those salient finer points that is very difficult to comprehend. Madam Speaker, if you can recall just at the last sitting of last month, all these views and assessments, mitigation, management, all came to naught when *TC Josie* and *TC Keni* struck us.

Madam Speaker, we are gripped with these climate disruptions. These ad hoc statements all point to the fact that the Honourable Minister cannot put together a comprehensive water policy for the nation that this has to question whether there is competent issue at hand.

In 2014, Madam Speaker, the then Minister Natuva stated that this Government would review existing water laws and I note that a draft Water Policy stated the following:

That the Government will investigate the requirements for water legislation in order to establish the required mechanism to allocate water which:

- gives water entitlements to all types of users;
- avoids or minimises conflict over water access;
- gives water users greater certainty of access to water for their requirements;
- enables sustainable levels of water exploitation to be maintained;
- clarify this legal status of water users and all parties that rely on water or are affected by its conditions and use;
- recognise those benefits of water to which owners of native land or iTaukei land should be entitled and ensure that they receive appropriate value;
- include coverage of areas of water management, not adequately included in current legislation; and
- establish a divisional mechanism to resolve conflict associated water allocation and use.

Madam Speaker, these were the draft policy guidelines that the Minister had informed this Parliament then.

Madam Speaker, perhaps it might help the Minister and his supposed signs to deviate from H<sub>2</sub>O which is water and more towards sea which is carbon. Government's priority is serving COP 23 President because the Minister's portfolio is very probably hiking up carbon emissions in the efforts to manage waterways during recent times of climate disruptions. It would be of comfort to this House, Madam Speaker, and to be given comfort to the Minister's efforts that are themselves managing carbon offsets otherwise all these efforts will be counter instituted in our own national carbon emissions rise.

Surface Water Assessment: The Surface Water Assessments and Surface Water Management are normally carried out by the hydrologists. In the last few year, we have not heard of hydrologists available and the consultants who did these works, apart from JICA were all consultants who had very little experience in these works. So, the Minister, at one point, rightly stated that the competent and

professional contribution of these hydrologists was lacking all along. But then we have had so many years to correct this. I hope that the Minister does not wrongly correct the incorrect, the way that was done.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members, I have been informed that there are no Bills for consideration. We will move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

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 upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to move the motion.

### **REPORT ON THE PETITION BY LANDOWNERS OF NAWAILEVU, BUA**

HON. CDR. J.R. CAWAKI.- Madam Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Report on the Petition by the landowners of Nawailevu, Bua for the payment of full and fair share of royalties for the mining of bauxite which was tabled in Parliament on 10th February, 2016.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to speak on his motion.

HON. CDR. J.R. CAWAKI.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Acting Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of Opposition and the Honourable Members of the august House: on behalf of the Honourable Members of the Natural Resources Standing Committee, I take this opportunity to speak on the motion in regards to the Petition made by the landowners of Nawailevu in Bua for the payment of full and fair share of royalties for the mining of the bauxite which was presented to Parliament by Honourable Mosese Bulitavu.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Members of the Standing Committee and Natural Resources for this bipartisan report. I also wish to extend my appreciation for the following Government Ministries and Departments for their contribution during our consultations, the:

- Ministry of Public Enterprise, especially the Northern Development Programme;
- Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, the Deputy Secretary of Operation;
- Ministry of Rural Maritime and National Disaster Management, the Divisional Commissioner Northern and its Northern Government team;
- Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, the Deputy Secretary (Operation) in the Ministry; The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources;
- Ministry of Local Government and Environment;
- Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs;
- *iTaukei* Lands Trust Boards; and
- four Landowning Units, *mataqali* representatives and the villagers of Nawailevu in Bua.

Madam Speaker, firstly the purpose of the Petition was to call for the fulfilment of promises made by the Government to the Landowning Units of Nawailevu, Bua. This included the payment of the

environmental damages for the payment of all fair share royalties due to the landowners from the mining of the bauxite.

The Petition was signed by members of the public with approximately 226 signatures.

Bauxite mining is new to Fiji. Nawailevu Bauxite mine in Bua is the first to be undertaken in the country. Due to this, there has been a lot of teething problems that can only be addressed through experience, proper consultations, research and development. This is also the first lease to be issued by the Director of Lands on behalf of the trustees of the landowning unit under the Land Use Decree of 2010.

This is a special lease mining excavation site over an area of 150.7827 hectares for a term of 20 years with effect from 1st February, 2011. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed that are still pending, one of which is the fair share payments to the landowning units. This is necessary to ensure that other mining leases in the future can be expediently processed.

Madam Speaker, the Committee noted that the Petition was based on the lack and poor financial management and the grievances raised by only one Landowning Unit, *Mataqali* Naicobo in the utilisation of their lease money. The other three *Mataqalis*, though they received their lease money, adhered to Government and other advices provided to them and invested their moneys through investment projects.

Madam Speaker, the bauxite mining licence in the Nawailevu area in Bua was awarded to a Canadian Company called Aurum Exploration (Fiji) Limited, commonly known in Vanua Levu as *Xinfa*, which leased land belonging to four *Mataqalis* or landowning units namely:

- *Mataqali* Naicobo of Nawailevu, 150.7827 hectares;
- *Mataqali* Nalutu of Navakasiga Village, the supply of rocks;
- *Mataqali* Noro of Naiviqiri Village, the land where the bauxite stockpile is being held; and
- *Mataqali* Naita of Votua Village, lease of 34.8459 hectares.

Madam Speaker, the Committee was also made aware that all the due regulatory administrative processes were completed before the actual mining operations commenced. The four *mataqali* had received their full and fair share of leases due to them to date in accordance with respective laws and their respective areas leased. The awaiting payments that landowners are claiming are the payment of the Future Generation Fund. This is a fund created for the future generation of the landowners and the payment of the fair share of royalties under Section 30 of the 2013 Constitution.

Madam Speaker, the Committee also noted that the Future Generation Fund of \$600,000 has already been paid by the Exploration Company and is awaiting the process of disbursement through the Divisional Commissioner, Northern, one of the executors of the fund before the distribution of this investment fund to benefit the future generations of the landowners. The fair share of royalties' formula is yet to be finalised by the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources.

Madam Speaker, the bipartisan Standing Committee unanimously agreed to call all relevant stakeholders, received their views and analysis of the Petition by the landowners of Nawailevu, Bua for the payment of full and fair share of royalties for the mining of bauxites. We had anticipated that the recommendation made in the Report by the Committee is given due consideration by Government addressed through appropriately.

Madam Speaker, with those few comments as the Member moving the motion, I thank you for this opportunity. *Vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, the motion is now open for debate and I invite input, if any? Honourable Ro Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just like to reiterate that this bipartisan Report is in accordance with the Petition that was submitted to Parliament and mandated the Natural Resources Standing Committee to look through as highlighted by the Chairman of the Standing Committee. However, if I can share some issues that arose through our consultations.

Firstly, as alluded to, the fair share royalty for the landowners of Nawailevu was only for two years, and it is finished now. There is no more mining in Nawailevu, so whether they still qualify for that fair share given the fact that it is now about two years when it is due, whether that money will go to the landowners as mandated in Section 30 of the Constitution.

So one issue that has been raised in this august House, questions being raised to the Honourable Minister of Mineral Resources then in regards to the pine replantation and for the benefit of the landowners, they should know that the pine will always belong to the lessee. So for the next 18 years, it belongs to Xinfra or Aurum Exploration for having owned the lease, which means that as far as the aspiration of the landowners to harvest the pines, they can disqualify that in terms of the rehabilitation. We did visit the site afterwards and the pine trees are growing rapidly which completely changed the landscape, which is very commendable, Madam Speaker.

Another issue that I would like to raise in terms of the transfer of the lease from Fiji Pine, is that the mine site was leased by the Fiji Pine Limited. It was a pine plantation after it had been harvested then the Fiji Pine gave it back to the landowners then from the landowners when this mining company's expression of interest was received, it was transferred to the Land Bank and the process of that acquisition. What I would like to bring to this House is, how was it transferred?

According to their submission, it took only about 30 minutes for that transition to take place which does not give an opportunity for the landowners in terms of consultation to give their views. As a matter of fact, there is a lack of participation by the TLTB to be able to represent the landowners.

So it was a take it or leave it issue as far as those from the Government who were there. I would like to point out too, which is very important, the implication on the involvement of the Honourable Prime Minister in such issues. For the transition of the land to the Land Bank was an issue that was raised by the Honourable Prime Minister for the betterment of the nation. But what I am stressing is the victimisation of the landowners in this respect; not being properly represented by the TLTB.

Another issue too that I would like to raise is the mention of the Honourable Prime Minister's name in these promises to provide free housing, electricity and water to the people of Nawailevu which was misconstrued according to our Report. But the fact that I would like to emphasise is the continuous mention of the name of the Prime Minister being brought up in such negotiations at that level.

In fact the company has also insinuated that the authority was from the Prime Minister whereas we have the Department of Mineral Resources. The environment issue as far as the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is concerned gives non-transparency in the whole process with the name of the Honourable Prime Minister being brought up there and then, whether it was misconstrued but the fact is that it has been raised during consultation with the people.

That is probably an issue. In this instance, if I can say, the victimisation of the landowners of Nawailevu given that their traditional ground, culture, way of life and as highlighted, there was no proper management of their money. But who is to be blamed? Who will take that responsibility? It is probably the Government of the day that would be able to help the Nawailevu people.



There is always a saying that goes that landowners are resource rich and yet cash poor. That is the situation in Nawailevu. There is no change. Usually we will always emphasise that even with the mahogany plantations, they are still resource rich but cash poor.

Otherwise I think our Report is a fair one and I hope in that context all the issues that are being raised would be taken on board. Mind you, Madam Speaker, there are about 20 million tonnes of bauxite in Vanua Levu and there is a next site, Dreketi which is in mining now. So it will continue and I hope having Nawailevu as an example, that we will progress forward for the betterment of the landowners. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I would like to reiterate that our Report is a bi-partisan report and the Committee had a very wide consultation and have highlighted a lot of issues that have been reflected in our recommendations. There are some issues that I want to focus on.

One that had already been mentioned by my colleague the formulation of the law to address the payment of the fair share of royalties under Section 30 of the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, this has been raised a number of times in this august House and the issue is still under progress. My concern is that it has not been applied in any of the mining operations, Nawailevu was the first one where it should have been applied. There are a lot of mining operations in the process but the question is, how long are we going to wait?

The people of Nawailevu as already being mentioned, two years now have finished and they should have got their money and the law has not been finalised. My advice to the Ministry of Lands, if they are too busy to come up with the law, then if this process could be outsourced so that it can be activated quickly. Again, Madam Speaker, the need for better coordination between all stakeholders; the landowners unit, the Government, the Department of Environment and even the Ministry of Labour in such an operation.

Another thing Madam Speaker, is the condition of the lease. It should be in accordance with the existing laws, the statute that governs such leases. The Government in negotiating the future, I must commend the Government in negotiating this future generation fund. Even though it is not in any statute and we do not know how this was calculated and on what basis but this will now become a precedent in future mining leases.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, this fund as had been mentioned by our Chairman, \$600,000 is held with the Divisional Commissioner Northern. Another \$150,000 has to be paid in instalments for the remainder of the lease which is 18 years. One point I would like to raise here, Madam Speaker, I do not know whether the \$600,000 with Commissioner Northern is earning interest. Secondly, on the payment of the \$150,000 over 18 years; normally when you engage in this type of periodic payment of money, it must also attract an interest so as to capture the value for money over the period. In this case, Madam Speaker, there was none and the landowners in my opinion had lost out in interest and I think they have been robbed.

The advice to the landowners which had been reiterated by my colleague, the lack of proper advice given to the landowners before the mining started. The options available to them, how they were educated and the lease; which is a better option whether to lease direct from iTLTB or transfer their land

to the Land Bank. On how we see it, Madam Speaker, now they have regretted giving the land to the Land Bank because they were never advised properly on the consequences of having their land with the Land Bank. Those are some of the issues, Madam Speaker, that come out in the consultation.

Again, the false promises that have been paid to the landowners, maybe it was to entice them to give their lease probably for mining (we do not know) but it is not too late for the Government. If you have made some promises and you have not fulfilled it, you should go back to the landowners and tell them when you are going to do it. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Parmod Chand?

HON. P. CHAND.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a short contribution. At the outset I wish to record my thanks to the Committee for their insightful recommendations and I thank them also for attaching as Appendix 2, the copies of the lease documents of Nawailevu Mine area. It makes it more interesting reading, Madam Speaker.

I would like to pick up on Recommendation 14 of the Report which states: “The EIA should constantly be reviewed during the life of the mining operations”.

Madam Speaker, it looks to me that the Environmental Act and the loopholes in the EIA process needs to be looked at. I do not make this statement lightly because there is a submission by the Acting Director of Environment - Mr. Qareqare that is cited in the Report on Pages 13 and 14 which is quite worrying. It is worrying that the report records the Environment Department’s involvement in the rehabilitation of the mining area. Surely, this is the job of the mining company and should be an area of compensation if the Government is picking up the tab for the mining companies.

Madam Speaker, it is further worrying that the Environment Department did not record any complaints raised by landowners in relation to environmental damages to the river and sea. I am really struggling to see how this can happen because the EIA Regulation confirms that upon an EIA proposal being published, the processing authority must arrange for a review of the report to be conducted as required by Section 30 of the Act. If our EIA laws are lacking then I would suggest that the Chiefly Legal Advisor to Government look into a comprehensive programme of reviews to all our laws that are not fit for purpose based on feedback that is coming from the people for whom these laws are ultimately for and that is the taxpayers. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I would just like to make a short contribution. I am looking at the recommendations here, Madam Speaker, and good that the recommendations is bipartisan. But I sincerely feel that what happened at Nawailevu is totally sad and it is an example of how this Government has tried to alienate the rights of a particular ethnic group in this case the indigenous Fijians. Let me clarify that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Point of order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of order.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member is trying to impute that Government’s action is actually targeted towards one ethnic group. He is claiming that because of this particular incident we are trying to annihilate indigenous Fijians and their rights and that is false. It should not be allowed, Madam Speaker.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, let me clarify what I said. Take for example land rights. What is their land right? They have the right to be consulted and here it says “there is a lack of consultation”; they have a right to own and manage their native land and it is very important. Is NLTB managing their land? No. NLTB has been nationalised.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order. Please the use of “annihilate” as you used before is very strong. I would like you to withdraw that before you continue with your contribution.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Water down.

So those are examples. They were not properly consulted. There is a fundamental right for this indigenous people is that they have to have their right for free and prior consent.

HON. SPEAKER.- I would like you to withdraw first the use of that word which is very strong.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Which word, Madam Speaker?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Annihilate.

HON. SPEAKER.- “Annihilate” the indigenous Fijians, it seems too strong, it is very racist. I would like you to withdraw that before you continue with your clarification.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes, I withdraw that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A right to free and prior consent and here it says that it was never done in relation to these people and it is a clear case of exploitation. Now, they have a right also to maintain their way of living. Now, you ask was there any social impact assessment conducted here? It was never done and as an example I went to this place after everything was said and done and what did I find? The same tinned houses. There is a big land that is being replanted with pine but who owns it? It is owned by a separate company and they bought vehicles. Where are the vehicles? The vehicles were just sitting there.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes and the problem falls directly on that side of the House and that is just part of the programme of the House to take away the rights of these ethnic group and you have done that and I did not revisit them. But it is a shame especially from that side of the House to have done this to a people and this is a very good example of that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. At the outset, Madam Speaker, let me thank the Committee on Natural Resources for a report of this depth and very comprehensive and I would wish that other resource owners in this country read this report. Saying that, Madam Speaker, the time they took to consult with people, I just wish, Madam Speaker, that it could be made available to all the Committees because I think when you do go out and hear people, you can put together a report of this quality that I believe should be widely read in the country.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I wish to pick on a few points. Firstly, in 3.1 on deliberations, the landowners were not privy nor partake in the lease and contract agreement negotiations. If I can also go to the conclusion which is No. 6, the landowners are always vulnerable to exploitation by opportunists.

Madam Speaker, the sad part of the matter is that this is still happening in Fiji. It is 2018 and it is still happening in Fiji and I am amazed that in a case of Nawailevu, that the landowners were not part of the consultation in a meaningful way and there were opportunists who took advantage of that.

Madam Speaker, it is happening a lot in this country and if I can quote an example, in Vuda Vuda Mariner is being built and the landowners who own the *qoliqoli* are up in arms because there were two valuations on the compensation for the *qoliqoli*. Firstly, by the Ministry of Fisheries who has put the value on the compensation at \$850,000 and one was the valuation by USP who has put the valuation at \$200,000. They have given the Mariner on the valuation by USP; that is a blatant abuse of power.

Madam Speaker, I have here three letters from the people of Vuda and they are even now saying that they are so upset, "keep your money, we are tired of meeting with you, you do not copy us on any of the Minutes and it has been ongoing for years." This is an example. It is a sad indictment of FijiFirst on the way they handle the issues for resource owners. It is sad. We know the people of Vuda, Madam Speaker, our beginning and for them to say, "keep your money, you are not even following due process" is very sad.

When I read these letters and speak with them, the treatment is almost cavalier. You do not do these to people for a Government that projects itself to be the guardian of people's rights. It is not happening in Fiji and in Nawailevu, for example, and I quote that example about Viseisei, Vuda.

On the other case, Madam Speaker, on 3(2), TLTB should represent the landowners interest were totally out of the picture and not directly involved as the land had been deposited to Land Bank Unit.

Madam Speaker, the Land Bank is a disaster. I mean that is a long and short of it, it is a disaster.

We have cases, Madam Speaker, in the West in Korovuto. They were having this gathering in the village green and all of a sudden they saw people moving in, bulldozing a part of their land and they said, "What is happening?" They said, "We have a lease on this land." They had a lease already through TLTB but another party was given the lease on the same land through Land Bank. It happened in Sabeto and Vitogo.

Madam Speaker, the Land Bank is creating a lot of problems with us. Let it be known today, SODELPA will remove the Land Bank.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Let it be known today. If we need a Land Bank it will come under TLTB. Let it be known today, it is a disaster.

Madam Speaker, in terms of rehabilitation, I noticed here that pine is being planted on the land that has been excavated.

Madam Speaker, Bua was famous for sandalwood. Why have not they planted sandalwood in there? Looking at the history of Fiji, sandalwood in Bua was quite dominant and I think my colleague, the Honourable Minister for Forests will tell us that the very well matured pine would be minisculed compared to the value of a matured sandalwood. I believe it is something like under \$100 to \$20,000.

These are the types of things, Madam Speaker, that a caring Government would put in place if it is serious about looking after the affairs of the resource owners.

Madam Speaker, that is my contribution and again, I congratulate the Members of the Committee for producing such a comprehensive report from which we can all learn our mistakes, the mistakes of FijiFirst and do things properly the next time. Thank you.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to talk on one of the recommendations here but I think at the outset, I think the other side has a propensity to try to look at this side as not taking a, not paying a lot of attention to the needs of all Fijians. In particular they have this propensity to interpret everything as an attempt by the FijiFirst Government to downgrade a particular segment of our community. Nothing could be further from the truth as we talk about land and all of those issues.

We are very familiar with what has happened in the past. Under this FijiFirst Government, land has never been alienated from the indigenous owners of that particular land. This has never happened under this particular Government. Under this particular Government in the Constitution, we now have strengthened clauses in the Constitution to make sure that land can never be taken away. At the same time, we know from past history what has happened about land at Momi and Denarau. These things had happened.

Now, under the purview of this particular Government, or under the purview of governments that were in existence at that particular time, whatever the law was, as the Honourable Mere Samisoni has talked about, it is the spirit of the law. The thing that is important to us on this side is to make sure that we look after the interest of every group in our country because at the end of the day, while we are all Fijians we have different attributes, we have different resources, we have different traditions and culture that we need to maintain.

This side of the House has made sure, we made a strong commitment in the 2013 Constitution. The spirit of that commitment is the land and things that belong to an indigenous *iTaukei* are very important to us just as all the qualities and the things that are important to all other communities in Fiji is important to us, whether you are the descendant of someone that came from Giriti or whether your descendants of people that came from Lapita people that came to this country, all are important.

This side of the House we regard that. We do not take one issue like this, whatever has happened at Nawailevu and as I am looking at the report that we have here, and by the way, I thank the Committee and everyone who has been involved in this. I look at this report and note that there are four *mataqali* here. There is a complaint from one *mataqali*, so in fact 75 percent of the landowning groups seem to have been satisfied with what happened.

It would seem from the dollars and cents that we have here their future generation fund, the money that was given, the assistance for education and all of these other things were given out, one particular group used it well. It reminds me of the parable of the talents. We are always talking about biblical issue, the parable of talents, someone is given something, he goes and buries it in the ground and he thinks that he should be praised for that while others take what they have been given and they do good things with it and they get good results.

So that is something, I think we need to take that particular issue into perspective. This Government is focused on the needs of everyone in this country. The rights and the land of the indigenous *iTaukei* is something that we regard as very precious to all of us. We are all *iTaukei* here, a lot of us are *iTaukei* on this side and we regard that as precious. So, to stand in the House and to make an assertion

that what Government is trying to do is to trying to alienate and annihilate a particular segment of our population cannot be further from the truth.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member the use of that word, you need to withdraw it.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I am sorry I withdraw that particular, I do not what other terms to use for that particular term, Madam Speaker.

In addition to that, I had seen of the recommendation that we had here is recommendation 17 where it talks about that it appears from their consultation with the company, the non-involvement of the Ministry of Labour in terms of wage guidelines and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) compliant is evident.

I was not too sure with what that referred to. If that was referring to the establishment of the Wage Regulation Orders that governs the kind of wages that are paid in the wage sector, when this Wage Regulation Orders are developed there is always an open invitation for people to come to be part of the consultation. For this company Aurum or Xinfra, I think the period we are talking about here is 2016, if I am not mistaken. That is probably correct, so the previous Wage Regulation Orders would have been done in 2015. I am not too sure whether they participated in that consultation on what the wages should be, but they did not participate in the consultation in 2017.

Nevertheless, it is a mandatory requirement that all employers in Fiji be familiar with the Wage Regulation Orders and they have to put it up on the notice board so that the staff are aware of what the wages are that should be paid in that particular sector. Any staff member has a right to be able to, if they feel that they are not being paid the right wages, they can always contact our staff or people in that particular area and the staff in my Ministry will make sure that those issues are addressed.

The other issue that was raised here is the OHS non-compliance in this particular organisation. Once again, the first thing that I say, for the mining sector is currently not covered by the Health and Safety at Work which governs the OHS for all other organisations. They are covered by the legislations, I think it is the legislation to do with mining. Nevertheless, if there are OHS issues and they are brought to our Ministry or to other ministries we will address them.

In terms of OHS, every employers has a duty of care to make sure that they have the parent responsibility to make sure that their work places are safe for employees, and every employee has the right also if they find that his duty of care is not being addressed that these issues can be raised either with my Ministry or the Ministry responsible for mining and so forth.

There was one case in this particular organisation where I think someone passed away in 2016, that particular worker's compensation issue was addressed and it was resolved. Nevertheless, in the mining sector and in all sectors there is a duty of care for all employers to make sure that they look after the lives of their employees. We encourage all employers in the mining sector and all other sectors to make sure that the sanctity of human life is something that they hold in the highest esteem.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Salote Radrodro?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I take this opportunity to thank the Chair of the Natural Resources Committee and his Committee Members for the report and also for the opportunity of allowing me to be part of their delegation in which I had paid my own expenses, it was because of my very keen interest on this topic.

Having said that, I sat in in the meeting with the community in the village and observed that indeed, they were very much unaware of what was happening and I believe according to the

recommendations, it is because of the no consultation that involved them. Also as I looked around, there was no improvement in their village, so I question the Government as to how does this kind of development translate to the improvement of the development of local communities? Their houses remain the same, there was obviously no improvement in terms of any benefit that they would have got from this mining project.

I am happy that it is reported here with those recommendations and also, Madam Speaker, as we moved outside, I noticed the pine seedlings in their very small packs and I asked the guys that were attending to them: who does this belong to, does it belong to the company or the landowners? They said that they did not know.

I made a point of raising a question in this House when we came back and at that time the Honourable Vuniwaqa was the Minister, and I raised the question on, who benefits from this or how do the landowners benefit from the rehabilitation programme on the pine? The response, I remember quite clearly that it belonged to whoever owns the lease and also we have heard that.

Madam Speaker, that is why it is very unfortunate that the Government has not taken it on board to ensure that in the agreement, there is some kind of specified benefits that go to the landowners. So to crudely say it, “they come, they mine, they make their money and then in the rehabilitation programme, the pine is planted and again it is taken out of the country again, out of the foreign owners.” So basically, the mining that has been done in Nawailevu just does not benefit the people in Nawailevu in regards to their development. There is just nothing, and that is a very sad part of this mining.

As we have heard, they felt that this was being imposed on them, it was being rushed through, there was no consultation and they had agreed to it without really fully knowing the details or how they are going to benefit from that programme. So having said that, Madam Speaker, also there is an issue of the formula on fair share and also I remember it was brought up in this House that it was said that it was going to come in by way of a bill. Up until now, Madam Speaker, as also stated in the recommendation, that still has to be provided and I urge the Government to do that, in view of the other upcoming mining projects that are going to be coming up. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I was not going to speak but I think the recommendations in the Report have some very pertinent issues and I think they need to be highlighted.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about this issue, I want to first of all thank the Committee because I think just looking at the Report, it appears that this is a very good example of a bipartisan Committee working together and bringing out some very, very important issues in relation to a Petition.

Unfortunately, petitions are no longer that easy to come to us or go to Committees given the change in the Standing Orders, I wish that had not happen. So this is a very good example and I want to thank the Committee for working on this issue in this particular way.

The other issue, Madam Speaker, I want to point out from just looking at the Report, this is really not about one particular ethnic group. I think it is about extractive mining, it is about the structure of mining arrangements with landowners and landowners could be indigenous landowners or freehold landowners.

Here, Madam Speaker, I want to pick on Recommendation 5 which says that the legislation for determining a fair share of royalties from mining as under Section 30 of the Constitution be expediently

pursued. I think this is a very good recommendation from the Committee because if you look at Section 30, Madam Speaker, it talks about rights of landowners for fair share of royalties for extraction of minerals. Let me just quote, it says:

“All minerals in or under any land or water, are owned by the State, provided however, that the owners of any particular land (whether customary or freehold), or of any particular registered customary fishing rights shall be entitled to receive a fair share of royalties or other money paid to the State in respect of the grant by the State of rights to extract minerals from that land or the seabed in the area of those fishing rights”.

Madam Speaker, it is really an issue about extractive mining and what kind of laws we need to have. The second Section says:

“A written law may determine the framework for calculating” (and I think Honourable Radrodro pointed that out) “fair shares under subsection (1), taking into account all relevant factors, including the following –

- (a) any benefit that the owners received or may receive as a result of mineral exploration or exploitation;
- (b) the risk of environmental damage;
- (c) any legal obligation of the State to contribute to a fund to meet the cost of preventing, repairing or compensating for any environmental damage;
- (d) the cost to the State of administering exploration or exploitation rights; and
- (e) the appropriate contribution to the general revenue of the State to be made by any person granted exploration or exploitation rights.”

Madam Speaker, this is a very important national issue. It involves all kinds of landowners and that is why I think Honourable Radrodro is correct in pointing out to that fact, and I remember the former Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources had actually talked about bringing in a legislation or a bill which will determine all the nitty gritty requirements in the Constitution to give effect to the provisions in the Constitution so that we have a very clear understanding of how extractive mining legislation ought to make things very clear.

I know there was an Extractive Industries Workshop sometime back, if I remember correctly, and I read some very good recommendations coming out of that meeting. I remember it was held somewhere in Deuba, maybe we should go back and look at those recommendations.

Madam Speaker, I believe the way in which the Committee has been able to deliberate and bring out some very important recommendations. I was actually very pleased with the Report and I think it might do very well for the Government to consider that provision of the Constitution and actually bring a bill in to Parliament so that in the future, whenever there is extractive mining whether it is on indigenous land or freehold land, we have a very clear law which defines how those who might be exploiting and extracting minerals are able to abide by it so that the State, the landowners, the environmental aspects of the mining are all looked after, Madam Speaker.

So in that sense this Report and this Petition, I think we should pay tribute to all those people who actually signed the Petition and got our colleague, the Honourable Mo Bulitavu (who is not here) to actually bring that to Parliament so that this Committee of Parliament will have the opportunity to actually



deliberate on the matter and bring such a useful Report which can be used for future legislation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is great to see Honourable Biman Prasad quote extensively from the Fijian Constitution. I see that he actually held up the book itself, and it is the first time, and he quite rightly points out, that this is the first time we have a constitutional provision that actually allows and indeed, requires for fair share of payment of royalty to landowners, the first time ever and in such detail, Madam Speaker. There was no constitutional provision then, in the way that it is described here.

(Honourable Members interject)

Madam Speaker, yes, we accept the fact that there has been a delay in the actual Bill itself to be presented to Parliament. We have spoken to the Honourable Minister for Lands and his team are actually working on it. There is actually quite a lot of work involved in this because as the Honourable Prasad pointed out, you have to take into account the number of factors before you are actually able to determine the actual royalty payment and the share of the royalties.

Madam Speaker, as we know that when you do have extractive mining, there are a number of conditions that need to be fulfilled. Some people are under the misapprehension that you simply can give a group of landowning members to go ahead and make the decision for themselves in respect of mining, but as we all know, and as has been highlighted, and there are many issues such as environmental impact assessment that need to be done. There are a lot of impact on the environment not just on that particular site itself but further downstream or upstream, whatever the case maybe.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Committee again, and Honourable Usamate very lucidly actually highlighted the key points that perhaps I want to touch on and just perhaps elaborate on that. The key point is that, there are four landowning units. There is one particular issue of one particular land owning unit that has had some issues, whether it was by design, whether it was because there is lack of understanding and indeed, the Report does talk about public awareness and more awareness in respect of the landowning units in terms of what are the responsibilities and indeed obligations of all parties that are involved in it.

But, Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I think it turned out into a bit of a slinging match in having a go at Government in respect of it, because a bipartisan report by its very nature does mean that all the members actually agreed on these recommendations.

But unfortunately suddenly, the Honourable Ratu Kiliraki deteriorated into the slinging match and having a go at the Government. Madam Speaker, but the reality is in some of the evidence which has been provided, in fact they are factually incorrect.

Let me start off, Madam Speaker, that if you look at the law itself, which is the Land Use Act, it does say and it requires that 60 percent of the members of the landowning unit must agree for the land to actually be leased through the Land Bank. You need 60 percent consent. Once the Ministry has obtained the consent, then they make the recommendation, (I urge Members to read Section 4) to the Honourable Prime Minister who then designates the land as *iTaukei* land that can actually be leased through the Land Bank, that is the process and in all instances that has all been adhered to, Madam Speaker.

The Honourable Prime Minister's name may have come in and whether Honourable Ratu K. Kiliraki was insinuating some untoward behaviour by the Honourable Prime Minister, I do not know why

he has raised his name a number of times, but the Honourable Prime Minister at that point in time was also the Minister for Lands, so obviously, he would have been involved in the process and to insinuate some kind of untoward behaviour is *improper*.

Madam Speaker, I can go on, of course, about when *iTaukei* land is leased to the Land Bank, the Ministry of Lands does not take out any percentage from the lease moneys any administrative cost. Those people are familiar with that, Honourable Nawaikula also is familiar with this, that iTLTB had known, NLTB in those days used to take out 25 percent at one point in time as administration costs from the lease moneys that they collect on behalf of the landowners in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, the way that it is being portrayed as if prior to the Land Use Act that the landowners were able to do whatever they like with the lease themselves, no. All *iTaukei* landowners could only lease land through iTLTB or NLTB at that point in time. It was not legally recognised if a landowning unit went and leased land, it is called “*vakavanua* arrangement”, there is no proper legal standing for that. Lots of lands, of course, through the *vakavanua* arrangement where landowners go directly and collect \$20 or \$30 a week or month, whatever the case maybe, depending on whichever part of Fiji you are located.

Many people indeed have lived on *vakavanua* arrangements for 50 or 60 years, but it is incorrect to portray that prior to the Land Use Act, that landowners were free to do whatever they like without even consulting the iTLTB. Indeed, legally speaking, you could only lease *iTaukei* land through iTLTB or NLTB at that point in time. Madam Speaker, I can give numerous examples when you had only NLTB and how many landowners and land owning units were actually duped into leasing land at what we call peppercorn rent even some resorts along the Coral Coast. Honourable Gavoka and I have had this discussion before. How those lands were leased in 1970s and 1980s through NLTB and those landowners are still suffering today because of the lease conditions imposed then. So, please let us not come to this Parliament and portray that everything was heavenly prior to the Land Use Act; it was not.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, Honourable Lalabalavu who was then the Honourable Minister for Lands, when the Honourable Usamate raised the issue about Momi and Denarau, he said “that was the law”. Yes, he is absolutely correct, he acted within the law but the law was flawed. The law allowed for the permanent alienation of *iTaukei* land. Denarau under the SVT Government, *iTaukei* land was converted to Crown land then it was converted to freehold land. Momi, *iTaukei* land converted to Crown land and within a few hours or whatever it was or few days converted to freehold land.

Madam Speaker, that was the legal position, the legal position is that this does not allow that to happen anymore; it cannot happen. Madam Speaker, 91 percent of all the land in Fiji today is *iTaukei* land and it shall never reduce below that. It can only increase if anything, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the other point that the Honourable Usamate very lucidly highlighted, as we pointed out, out of the four landowning units, one had the grievance. Now to equate a grievance with one landowning unit and take a homogenising approach to say “we are affecting an entire ethnic group” is far-fetched, it is actually quite shameful.

It is shameful to say that. It is like saying if a person of one ethnic group gets raped by a person of another ethnic group therefore this is what they are doing to the ethnic group. No. Just because if I am classified as an Indo-Fijian, I go and break into the house of an *iTaukei*, does that mean that all Indo-Fijians are breaking into the houses of *iTaukei* people? No. It is the individual’s responsibility, it is the individual’s behaviour, and character and their conduct.

Madam Speaker, so this homogenising approach is very, very terrible because it has been the bane of our society because when you homogenise, Madam Speaker, you obfuscate, you neglect the intra

group injustices, the inter-group injustices, Madam Speaker also, but more importantly the intra group injustices. In every ethnic group there are good people, there are bad people, there are criminals, there are non-criminals, there are people who go to church, people who do not go church, there are people who steal, there are people who bribe, there are people who are corrupt, there are people who murder, there are people who do not murder - every ethnic group has it. So how can you sit here and stand here and homogenise it, just because one particular landowning unit may have a particular grievance?

Madam Speaker, the other point of course is that extractive mining in Fiji has not necessarily had a good history. Emperor Gold Mine, no one raised a twinkle of an eye about it. A 999-year lease, what happened to the land rights of those people? I do not hear anyone talking about that from the other side nor when they were in positions of authority, did they try and rectify it.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We know how it was made freehold, know your history.

Madam Speaker, I agree with the Honourable Parmod Chand about Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as recommended by the Committee that assessments need to be continuous. He now sort of took a deduction saying the person advising the legal affairs in Government should be looking at laws. Madam Speaker, in reality many laws are there but the implementation is a problem and we agree with that. That is why we are carrying out Civil Service Reforms, this is why we are asking the civil servants to do their job.

There are many buses that are running in Fiji that should be taken off the road. The law is there to say that emission should not be there, but they are driving along over with emissions and no one does anything. The EIA officers are not doing their job. There are many bus garage yards that are non-compliant. There are many other businesses, Madam Speaker, that are pumping pollution but the EIA people are not doing their job. In the same way we expect that perhaps, the EIA assessment, the environmental people may not have done their job and they need to continuously do it. The same way when TLTB issues forestry licences, there are certain things that the foresters cannot do but neither the environmental people on the ground or TLTB officers are necessarily doing their job.

The Honourable Dr. Reddy spoke about the fact that we have all these deluge from the hills because of unbridled forestry that is taking place, primarily because of the lack of that, Madam Speaker.

Honourable Kiliraki spoke about the Mahogany Industry Act. Madam Speaker, why did they not talk about what was the mahogany industry like prior to that? There were so much pilfering going on, you could go to actually certain groups of people and you could steal an entire forest. That is why some of them are perhaps in the Opposition are provisional candidates now because they are aggrieved by that, Madam Speaker. That is a fact.

Honourable Kiliraki did not talk about it then, they did not talk about the fact that the landowners did not get a single cent or profit in 1999 when they converted to the Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited. The landowners did not get it, they simply were given 10 percent shares but no dividends paid. So, Madam Speaker, when we come and debate in this Parliament, let us have some intellectual honesty. We need to have some intellectual honesty and look at the facts.

Madam Speaker, it is very interesting, they have been condemning the Land Use Act. There is one person, NFP provisional candidate, very vocal on social media about these policies but the entire family's resort has been converted to land use under the Land Use Act – Kokomo Resort. They said that TLTB was not giving them the lease, they had a multi-billion dollar investor from Australia who did not

want to deal with TLTB. The landowning unit came and said, “Can we please have it converted under Land Use Act?”

The Honourable Prime Minister said, and I was there present with him, he said, “please go and get the consent of the members of the landowning unit, only then it can happen.” Only when they did do that, Madam Speaker, today we now have at least \$200 million being invested in Kadavu in that resort.

So again, Madam Speaker, there needs to be this level of understanding. This Pauline Hanson approach to politics must go out the window. We cannot have the Pauline Hanson approach to politics, everything sort of boils down into ethnicity, the roads are going to ethnicity. This Government is not here to target one particular group, let us not do that, Madam Speaker.

I commend the Committee for many of the recommendations that they have made, which of course, we believe some of them can be of course fine-tuned but, Madam Speaker, this is the reality. We need to learn from this, we need to be able to understand how best we can do and as being seen, we have all acknowledged that.

Sometimes landowning units appoint people as their trustees to look after their finances, they do not necessarily do the good thing by them. We have seen that. If you see the three landowning units, they are all right, they are happy. One landowning unit, the Honourable Seruiratu is not here unfortunately was Commissioner Northern then, the last time when we had a similar debate he did raise those issues. He did say that there were one or two individuals who were perhaps not necessarily accounting for the funds that this particular landowning unit received. We have to acknowledge that, Madam Speaker, it does happen.

It is not only peculiar to this landowning unit, it has happened in other places too and we absolutely agree that there is of course a need for these landowning units to also have a particular level of independence. Then when you talk about determination, if they are given a funding, we cannot actually tell them exactly how to spend it. It is inappropriate to do that.

Madam Speaker, I would like to once again thank the Committee. We, of course have a number of opportunities that does arise from this. We absolutely need to be mindful just to bring it to the attention of the Parliament, Madam Speaker.

We have got a World Bank Team with the consultants, they have hired some consultants we are looking at previously, as highlighted. We are looking at geothermal energy so rather than getting companies to do the actual exploration themselves, we have got this team to do it. Once they identify commercially viable areas where geothermal energy can be extracted, we will then call for actual mining licences because you know exactly what is there.

Previously what has happened, we have allowed for companies to go and do exploration, not knowing the information ourselves and they are able to do a bit of wheel and deal situation. So, in that particular instant that is probably the way ahead and we again would like to apologise to Parliament that we have not brought the Bill as yet in compliance with Section 30 but we will do that very soon. In fact the Honourable Minister has said that they have got a draft policy that they want to present to Cabinet and we will soon present it to Parliament. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Time has caught up with us and I think a suspension motion is due. I now I call upon the Acting Leader of the Government in Parliament.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

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

That under Standing Order 6, so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 4.30 p.m. today to complete all Items as listed in today's Order Paper.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Acting Leader of Government to Parliament to speak on the motion.

HON. ACTING LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.-. Thank you, Madam Speaker. As being highlighted in the Order Paper today we have another two motions that need to be debated before we finish with the business of the day.

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

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, I have a very short contribution to make. First of all, I would like to thank the Committee for their report.

My attention, Madam Speaker, is drawn to 3.1 of their deliberation.

HON. SPEAKER.- Are you speaking on the motion?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- The motion?

HON. SPEAKER.- On the motion first then we will continue after that.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- I apologise, Madam Speaker. I thought that was done and we are moving on.

HON. SPEAKER.- Not yet.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Does anyone want to speak on the motion?

Question put.

The Question is:

That under Standing Order 6 that so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 4.30 p.m. today to complete all items as listed on today's Order Paper.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

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

Motion agreed to.

Before we continue I would like to seek leave of the House that we continue with this until the end or do you want a break for afternoon tea?

HON. MEMBERS.- Continue.

**RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE REPORT ON THE PETITION  
BY THE LANDOWNERS OF NAWAILEVU, BUA**

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

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- I feel very ashamed to stand up now.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, I had just mentioned that I thank the Committee for their report but my attention is drawn to their deliberation on 3.1. That probably, Madam Speaker, is the point that I will try to emphasise on. The landowners who were not privy, this is what it says, "... no partake in the lease and contract arrangement negotiation which totally eliminated them from participating meaningfully in business process."

Madam Speaker, reading that, we have to ask the question then who was participating on their behalf? Now, we understand that on behalf of the landowners, the Government itself was the one that was negotiating on their behalf. I am trying to understand a situation where the Constitution says that no native land can be alienated and to the fact of this process where their voice and their contribution were being denied. They were not allowed to participate. This is very sad when I think about it.

Madam Speaker, I understand that because there were two individuals who were there to try to negotiate on behalf of the landowners, they were eventually ejected from the meeting because the Government did not want them to be advising the landowners against what the Government had wanted to do in terms of the compensation that should be done and given to the landowners.

I am thinking about the situation of the Constitution, Madam Speaker, where all minerals under the ground belongs to the Government but the surface area belongs to the landowners, to the landowning unit. Now it appears to me that the landowning unit that owns the surface is being completely ignored, denied of their rights. It is the Government that comes in as the owner of the minerals, doing the negotiation even on behalf of the landowning unit too that owns the surface of the land.

That, I see, Madam Speaker, as no different from their land being alienated because they have no say in it at all. I know those that were negotiating on behalf of the Government for the landowning unit they were, the Chairman of the Trust at the time, who was the Commissioner Northern and the former PS at the Prime Minister's Office. They were the ones negotiating on behalf of the Government.

I understand that through that negotiation they only came out with \$1.7 million to be paid to the landowners. That is an unfortunate thing because it was paid to them as a purported fair share because they own the surface of the land but the Government controls or dictates what is given to them. Madam Speaker, even for what it to be paid to those who were helping the landowners then, those people had nothing to do with it. It was determined and decided by those that were negotiating on behalf of the Government. If the landowners find themselves at this time after all these dealings in a stage where they did not think they would be in, it is not because of them, it is because of the Government because they had nothing to do with that negotiation. This is my point, Madam Speaker. I think if anything is to be

addressed, the Government should realise that there were some unjust dealings done and the Government should attend to that because it was the Government that had done all the negotiations on their behalf.

I would just like to raise, Madam Speaker, although it is stated in the Constitution that no native land has been alienated but with this kind of process, their rights are actually being denied. It is exactly the same as their land being taken away from them because they have no right to participate and not given a chance to be part of the negotiation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to speak in reply.

HON. CDR. J.R. CAWAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Members who have spoken on our report. I would like to confirm that all the due regulatory and administrative process for this mining lease were completed before the actual mining operation commenced and the four *mataqali* had received their full and fair share of leases due to them in accordance with the respective laws and the respective areas leased for each *mataqali*.

Unfortunately, for one *mataqali*, *Mataqali Naicobo*, in our meeting at the village, while each representative of the four *mataqali* presented, the other three *mataqali* including the *qoliqoli* of *vanua* of *Lekutu*, the compensation was also invested. With all the other three *mataqali* they have invested their money into investment projects but it was only confirmed there at the meeting that *Mataqali Naicobo* did zero investment of their money and they are the ones that put up this petition with a lot of excuses and blaming Government.

And as I said, this is the first bauxite mining in Vanua Levu, the Committee acknowledge that there has been a lot of teething problems that can be addressed through the experience. Now the Committee has been to *Dreketi*, where the company has moved over but it is different from *Nawailevu*. We were there towards the end of last year and we have seen the difference. As I said, through experience, through more consultation, research and development we can do better. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs to move the motion.

## **REVIEW REPORT OF THE FIJI INTELLIGENCE UNIT ANNUAL REPORT 2015**

HON. L. EDEN.- Madam Speaker, I move:

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

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

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Now I invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs to speak on the motion.

HON. L. EDEN.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Fiji Intelligence Unit or FIU as they are more commonly known by was established in 2006 under the Financial Transactions Reporting Act and had been administered and funded by the Reserve Bank of Fiji. They are one of the leading agencies in Fiji that is primarily responsible for preventing and detecting money laundering, terrorist financing activities and other proceed generating criminal activities such as fraud, corruption and tax evasion.

Madam Speaker, back in 2015 although FIU was a financial intelligence body that did not have formal investigative powers to arrest and charge suspects or restrain properties, they had become an integral part and contributor in successfully investigating and prosecuting money launderers and other serious financial related criminals. They are basically an intelligence gathering unit, Madam Speaker, who work very closely with the likes of FICAC, FRCS, the Transnational Crime Unit, the Immigration Department and the Fiji Police Force among others and information is shared freely between them which leads to the prosecution and conviction of guilty parties. As an insight into FIU's intelligence gathering role, Madam Speaker, in 2015, it analysed just over 1.6 million Financial Transaction Reports, which was an average of 134, 237 per month.

And not to bore you with too many figures, Madam Speaker, I will highlight just two values of case dissemination reports and these are between FIU and FRCS and FIU and the Fiji Police Force. In 2015 FIU completed 137 case dissemination reports for FRCS which had a total value of just over \$94 million, that same year, they carried out 30 case dissemination reports for the Fiji Police Force, which had a total value of just over \$55 million. We noted that there was six leading agencies that made up the Anti-Money Laundering Council of which FIU is a member and although that we saw that in some cases overlapping of roles was unavoidable, we recommended that for the future, a clear demarcation of roles of each agency should be defined especially between FIU, FICAC and the Fiji Police Force, as this will streamline and speed up processes without unnecessary duplication.

We also noted, Madam Speaker, that FIU is to gradually progress towards full independence as a standalone entity and recommend that the process be properly resourced each step of the way. Madam Speaker, our Fiji Intelligence Unit are a team of highly trained experts, who since inception have worked quietly and diligently behind the scene to keep our country safe from money launderers and other financial related crimes that seek us out. After perusal of their Annual Report of 2015, the Committee was not only surprised at the amount of work they do but were pleased that we have such a highly skilled operation in place. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The motion is now open for debate and I invite input, if any? Honourable Jilila Kumar.

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to contribute to the Standing Committee of Economic Affairs Report on the Fiji Intelligence Unit Annual Report 2015. Firstly I would like to thank them for this commendable report. Madam Speaker, I have chosen two recommendations that I would like to talk upon.

The first is Recommendation No. 1. With this Recommendation, Madam Speaker, the Committee recommends that the Financial Transaction Reporting Act 2004 be reviewed. In my opinion, Madam



Speaker, this is a very important recommendation. The reason being is that when the world becomes modernised, criminal activities also become modernised. In this way, they always want to go to another level to find space or to find an act whereby they can create something to accommodate their criminal activities, in this case money laundering activities. So therefore, Madam Speaker, it is very important for our nation to accommodate for the reviewing of this Financial Transaction Reporting Act 2004.

The second recommendation, Madam Speaker is recommendation three. As we all know that the Fiji Intelligence Unit and other agencies such as Fiji Police Force are all intelligence units. It is very important for these intelligence units to work together for the effectiveness and appropriateness because we are talking about information sharing. It is very important for these agencies to share information so that they can help each other particularly for the Fiji Intelligence Unit so that their work can be effective in catching money laundering activities and this activity, Madam Speaker, is a concern all over the world and Fiji too, particularly with the Base Erosion Profit Shifting (BEPS). This is one way, Madam Speaker, where these agencies work together by sharing the information, and this is one way of combatting this crime of money laundering activity in our country.

With those few words Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Committee once again for this commendable report. Thank you for indulgence.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other input, I invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee to speak in reply.

HON. L. EDEN.- Thank you Madam Speaker, I have no further comments.

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.

### **REVIEW REPORT ON THE FIJI MEAT INDUSTRY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2013**

HON. L. EDEN.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that:

Parliament debates the report on Fiji Meat Industry Board Annual Report 2013 which was tabled on 22nd March, 2017.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs to speak on the motion.

HON. L. EDEN.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Fiji Meat Industry Board (FMIB) was established in 1976 under the Meat Industry Act of 1969. It was assigned various key functions some of which included constructing and operating public slaughtering facilities, taking necessary steps for the protection, preservation and expansion of the Meat Industry in Fiji and the purchasing, trading or dealing with livestock meat and its by-products.

Madam Speaker, after reviewing the FMIB Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 2013, the Committee concluded that despite recording a profit of around \$326, 000, their financial position was still quite weak.

Following the deliberations and scrutiny of the various submissions received from relevant stakeholders, it was agreed that a lot of work and cost would be required to revitalise FMIB. This sentiment was also shared by the Ministry of Public Enterprises. We suggested that a direction that could be looked at would be to divest and privatise FMIB which would ultimately result in the establishment of more efficient and sustainable abattoirs throughout the country.

In light of this suggestion, the Committee put forward as its first recommendation that regions like Taveuni and parts of Vanua Levu whose climatic conditions are similar to that of Vanuatu who are renowned for their premium beef have the potential to develop speciality Fijian brand of beef, but having access to abattoirs close to their farms would be essential for this to succeed.

Also vitally important for this to eventuate was the review and update of the Meat Industry Act of 1969 which has since been attended to.

Madam Speaker, there were many challenges faced by FMIB and the industry as a whole back in 2013. They ranged from poor farming practices to unfavourable weather conditions, infectious disease outbreaks and the need for more research and development to assist farmers with managing their stocks. Many of these issues have since been addressed but despite this, the number of available stock overall continued to dwindle.

To combat this, Madam Speaker, the Committee recommended that more thorough testing be conducted for tuberculosis (TB) and other diseases prior to culling and that specialist in Research and Development (R&D) be engaged to enhance overall production and improve on future planning.

We also recommended that incentive packages be revisited to entice our young people into livestock farming to ensure long term continuity.

As a few points of interest, Madam Speaker, in 2013, 7,163 cattle were slaughtered producing 1,849 tonnes of beef; 7,122 Hides were salted and processed resulting in seven container loads being exported; 16,109 pigs produced a total of 967 tonnes of pork.

Madam Speaker, the numbers for sheep and goats were minimal and this showed that these two products are more generally prepared for consumption domestically.

Another interesting piece of information, Madam Speaker is what FMIB referred to as the “*magiti* trade”. More and more people are considering hygiene and more humane slaughter methods over the old backyards slaughter for catering at social gatherings.

FMIB in 2013, dealt with cattle and pigs for the *magiti* trade and as well as the consideration of hygiene and humane slaughter methods, they noticed that people much preferred the ease of picking up a dressed carcass over having to do it themselves at home.

With more abattoirs available around the country, this trend could see a marked increase over previous figures.

Madam Speaker, as at 31st December 2013, FMIB’s total asset value was \$3,026,927. The current liability was \$399,268 and their long-term liability which was related to a loan taken from FDB in 2004 for a tannery was \$1,427,124.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The motion is now open for debate and I invite input, if any.

There being no input, then I take it that no one is speaking in reply, Parliament will now vote to note the content of the Report.

Question put.

(Chorus of “noes”)

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

Motion agreed to.

Thank you very much, Honourable Members. That brings to the end the items in today's Order Paper. Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 5.04 p.m.