

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**



## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

### **DAILY HANSARD**

**FRIDAY, 18TH MAY, 2018**

**[CORRECTED COPY]**

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**FRIDAY, 18TH MAY, 2018**

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

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

**PRESENT**

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for *iTaukei* Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs; the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism and Lands and Mineral Resources; the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation; the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services; the Honourable Assistant Minister for Agriculture; the Honourable Professor B.C. Prasad and the Honourable A.T. Vadei.

**MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 17th May, 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 the final sitting of Parliament for the month of May. I also welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching proceedings on television, internet and listening to the radio. I hope that you will enjoy today's proceedings, as well as learn about the Parliamentary practices and procedures.

Response to Written Question

For the information of Honourable Members, the Secretariat has received the response to Written Question No. 176/2018 from the Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport. The response has been conveyed accordingly to the Honourable Member who asked the question and copies can also be accessed on the Parliament website.

Requests from Parliamentary Committee Chairpersons

Honourable Members, I have received requests from two Committee Chairs for their respective Committees to meet after this sitting. Other Committee Chairs may also be considering the same therefore I will make a collective ruling on this matter instead of responding to individual Chairs.

As alluded to in an earlier ruling and taking into consideration the number of Annual Reports still being received in Parliament, I had ruled that the Committee should only take note of Annual

Reports for the years prior to 2014 but they can deliberate fully on Annual Reports post 2014. However, Honourable Members, I had earlier granted permission to all Committees to meet for five days to enable them to table all pending reports during this sitting and I thank all the Committee Chairs who have been able to do so. However, from next week, I am allowing Committees to meet only for three days per week, and not five.

#### Response to Tabling of Papers by Honourable Nawaikula

With respect to the papers that was inadvertently tabled by the Honourable Niko Nawaikula, I hereby rule that the correct procedure for the presentation and tabling of report or papers and documents have not been complied with in such a case. Subsequently, the paper will be returned to the Honourable Member and will not be made available to the public nor in the Parliament website.

#### Production of *Daily Hansard*, Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2018

For the information of Honourable Members, the Secretariat is finalising the printing of the *Daily Hansard* for yesterday's sitting and this will be distributed in due course. Thank you, Honourable Members.

### **PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to present the Committee's Report.

#### Standing Committee on Public Accounts - Accounts on the Performance Audits for the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2014 Follow-Up Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji's Audit Report on Performance Audits (Volume 1) of December, 2014

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. At the outset, I would like to thank you especially on behalf of all the Committee Chairpersons and the Committee Members for allowing us to sit for extended days prior to this sitting, which enabled us to complete substantive reports and a large number of reports have been tabled and that has enabled the Public Accounts Committee itself to finish four of its Reports.

Madam Speaker, I rise this morning to present the Accounts on the Performance Audits of the Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2014. This Report follows the Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji Audit Report on Performance Audits (Volume 1) of December, 2014. This is my Seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) Report as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I welcome the opportunity to showcase the progress of Government entities in Fiji continue to make. Even the issues identified in these reports have either been resolved or are in the process of being addressed.

I also thank fellow Committee Members for their efforts in clearing this backlog namely, Honourable Mohammed Dean, Honourable Alexander O'Connor, Honourable Aseri Radrodoro and Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu. Members of both Government and Opposition engaged in this process in a constructive manner and this is appreciated.

At this juncture, I would also like to remember the contributions of the late Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo.

This Report contains two general recommendations by the Committee. These recommendations have been made in good faith, and we urge the relevant party for which the recommendation is made, to consider and respond accordingly.

Madam Speaker, I commend this Report to the Parliament.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, please, hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

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

HON. M.M.A. DEAN.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Question is:

That a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of `Noes`)

HON. SPEAKER.-As no Member opposes, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to present the Committee's Report.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts -  
Follow-Up Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji -  
Audit Report on Performance Audits (Volume 2) - December 2014

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. This Report follows the Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji - Audit Report on Performance Audits (Volume 2) - December 2014. This is my Eighth Report (8<sup>th</sup>) as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I welcome the opportunity to showcase the progress of the Government entities in Fiji continue to make. Even the issues identified in these reports have either been resolved or are in the process of being addressed.

I also thank my fellow Committee Members for their efforts in clearing this backlog, namely, Honourable Mohammed Dean, Honourable Alexander O'Connor, Honourable Aseri Radrodoro and Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu. Members of both Government and Opposition engaged in this process in a constructive manner and this is appreciated.

This Report contains two general recommendations by the Committee. These recommendations have been made in good faith, and we urge the relevant party for which the recommendation is made, to consider and respond accordingly.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, please, hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

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

HON. M.M.A. DEAN.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Question is:

That a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of `Noes`)

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

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- I will now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to present the Committee's Report.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts -  
Audit Report on Special Projects - December 2014  
Follow-Up Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji -  
Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. This Report follows the Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji - Audit Report on Special Projects - December 2014. This is my Ninth (9th) Report as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

It should be noted, however, that the period which this Report addresses is for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014, therefore the issues noted may not be current. The future reports would explore the issues which may exist currently in those entities covered, namely the Fiji Roads Authority and the Water Authority of Fiji.

I would like to thank the representatives of each entity covered in this Report, particularly at the time of the public hearings held by the Public Accounts Committee. Although some entities received were not able to cover the audit findings within the time allocated, the feedback that was received was noted in a very positive way.

I thank my fellow Committee Members for their efforts, which include, Honourable Mohammed Dean, Honourable Alexander O'Connor, Honourable Aseri Radrodro and Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu. Members of both the Government and Opposition engaged in this process in a constructive manner and this is appreciated.

Recommendations have been made in good faith, and we urge the relevant party for which the recommendation is made, to consider and respond accordingly.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, please, hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

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

HON. M.M.A. DEAN- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Question is:

That a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

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

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts -  
Review Report of the Office of the Auditor General – 2014 to 2016 &  
2017 Annual Reports

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to present the Committee's Report.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the Consolidated Review Report of the Office of the Auditor-General 2014 to 2016 & 2017 Annual Reports. This is my Tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) Report as the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Madam Speaker, at this juncture, I would like to note that the previous Chair of the Committee made some comments in the media that the Public Accounts Committee will become a toothless tiger, it is not the case because we have done 10 Reports and all of them covered in detail all the issues that were raised.

The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji's authority, pursuant to Standing Order 110(1)(c) and as directed by the Speaker of the House for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts is to examine

and thereafter submit the findings to the Parliament of the Office of the Auditor-General 2014 and 2016 & 2017 Annual Reports.

The Annual Report contents were thoroughly examined by the Committee. The Office of the Auditor-General's officials were invited to explain to the bipartisan Committee a few grey areas that needed to be made clear to the Committee. The responses from the Office were exceptionally positive. The exercise of reviewing the Annual Reports was a learning experience for both the OAG officials and also for the Standing Committee Members. The documents were compiled and agreed to by the Committee following the review of the Annual Reports.

I wish to extend my appreciation to all the Honourable Members of the Committee who were part of the successful compilation of the bipartisan Report, namely the Honourable Mohammed Dean, Honourable Alexander O'Connor, Honourable Aseri Radrodro and Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu.

On behalf of the Committee, I also extend my appreciation to the Auditor-General and his team for their submission. My appreciation is also directed to the Secretariat staff.

Madam Speaker, I commend this Report to the Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

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

HON. M.M.A DEAN.- Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

Question put.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Question is:

That a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of `Noes')

HON. SPEAKER.- As no Member opposes, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

**QUESTIONS**Oral Questions

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I take it that Honourable Dr. Brij Lal has withdrawn his question.

(Question No. 205/2018 withdrawn)

In the absence of Honourable Prof. B.C. Prasad, I am allowing Honourable Prem Singh to ask Question No. 206/2018.

Fiji Airways – Localised Positions  
(Question No. 206/2018)

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

Would the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications inform Parliament as to when will Fiji Airways localise all positions currently held by expatriates?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the question actually demonstrates a lack of commercial understanding by the person who has asked the question. Madam Speaker, anyone who knows about the airline industry would know that airlines are exceptionally high capital and high cash flow operations where minor missed opportunities and mistakes can mean instant losses of hundreds of millions of dollars, if not more, Madam Speaker. So any responsible Board would actually appoint the best person to actually carry out the job.

Madam Speaker, of course, the question is also limited by the fact that it is saying “Localise all positions”. You have various positions within an airline company; you have the executive management team, you have middle management, you have the techs or the engineers, and of course the flight crew and the pilots and there are four or five categories. The fifth one of course are the financial team; the financial management, the commercial side of operations.

Madam Speaker, I have got a list of something like, at least 36 major airlines in the world that all have expatriates, even companies like Qantas, the CEO came as an expatriate, and he is an Irish man. I understand he may have taken up Australian citizenship by now and various other companies, even companies in India that run domestic airlines, that run large airline operation, a country of 1.2 billion or 1.3 billion people are using expatriates within the airlines. So, essentially because of the fact that our national carrier or airline is a company that actually operates in the international market, it has to obviously at times have expatriates. However, in Fiji’s case, Madam Speaker, in Fiji Airways, the company does have a policy to train locals wherever appropriate, wherever they see or identify strong characters, strong individuals who can take up various positions.

So, in recent times, Madam Speaker, in the executive leadership team, three of the eleven positions at Fiji Airways have actually replaced expatriates in the executive General Manager positions. Of course, one of them is a woman which we should all be proud of, because we have never had a person in that capacity to fill in that type of role before. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, among the group of 16 members of wider leadership team of General Managers who are separate to

their executive leadership team, 12 are Fijians, including 3 Fijian women and 5 of the 12 Fijians replace expatriate GMs who were in those roles previously.

Madam Speaker, there are a lot of changes taking place, I know sometimes they only seem to be concerned about pilots. I had given a Ministerial Statement in this respect, if they had listened they would have heard. Madam Speaker, for the Fiji Airways group which includes both the Fiji Link and also Fiji Airways, the number of local pilots we have; Fijians are 158 and expatriates are 95.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, as they would know that through the TELS programme too, we have provided a certain number of places within the TELS programme that allows students to actually exceed TELS. To be a pilot, the training costs hundreds of thousands of dollars literally. That is why the numbers have been limited or restricted to what Fiji Airways can have as an intake.

Madam Speaker, what will also help us in terms of getting more Fijians to become pilots is that we are setting up the Flight Simulator School, the ground breaking took place earlier in the last few months ago where within a year's time, we will have the 737 simulator and then depending on the white-bodied aircraft, we have the A350 or the Dreamliner, then the simulator will be put in place there. So, again there are various opportunities.

Of course, in respect of the flight attendants, they are almost invariably Fijian flight attendants, we have had one or two expatriates. For example, when they started flying to Hong Kong and we did not have flight attendants who could be fully conversant in Cantonese or Putonghua when they had to have those flight attendants who could speak only on those flights, then we put them on, Madam Speaker. We have, for example, in this case, we are starting to fly to Japan in July and two of the staff who would be flight attendants who are based in Japan are actually the daughters of former rugby players who are actually based in Japan now, and they have been there for years. So they are fully conversant with the Japanese language, and so they have actually been hired too.

Fundamentally, they need to understand from a commercial perspective, I think there is also one business person now on the other side, Honourable Chand, he would tell you that if you are going to have the option of hiring a person who is a Fijian or an expatriate and they both can perform the same role, obviously from a purely commercial perspective, you would hire the Fijian person because they are less expensive. It just makes commercial sense, but of course, you need to be able to see the point of delivery. If the person can have the same delivery, same input, obviously you will hire them. But in instances where you actually need that level of expertise and knowledge, of course, you will get someone who can perform the job at optimum level. Thank you.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. My question is, who is responsible for operations? If I could just put that question into context, I have just returned from Australia, and I returned on the A330. At the very last minute when I was on my way from the hotel in Brisbane, to fly from Brisbane to Nadi, it was changed around. Then I thought, "Well, I have got to get on to the domestic area rather than international", I did. Then when I went to ask and look for Fiji Airways, no one was there, there was Qantas there and they said to me, "Oh, no one would be around now." Anyway, I sat and looked then I noticed someone in the Fiji Airways uniform and I went over to ask. There were over 300 of us, running around, Madam Speaker, what do we do? This is at the process level, I understand there are changes and I concur but, Madam Speaker, we were running around, we did not know what to do, no one ....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I understand the Honourable Member has made a statement in respect of her own personal experience. I am sure all of us have personal experiences of many things in Fiji. I had a personal experience this morning where the water levels

in my shower went a bit low. But I am not here to talk about that and blame Water Authority of Fiji for that. If the Honourable Member has got a genuine complaint, I suggest that she writes to the Complaints Division ....

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- A point of order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- A point of order.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- My question was right at the beginning: who is responsible for operations? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I do not have the name of the person responsible for Operations, but I also do know that Fiji Airways does have a very good mechanism in respect of getting feedback from their customers and if they have got in particular a personal issue, then she needs to actually take it through those complaints mechanism. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. P. SINGH.- A supplementary question. I come back to the substantial question that there is no denying that there are a lot of expatriates in Fiji Airways, notably pilots, but we have been reliably informed that there is disparity in salaries. Expatriate pilots earn more than the local pilots despite having the same rank, for example, a captain of a A330 aircraft.

Madam Speaker, the question is: does the Acting Prime Minister believe that the disparity in salaries between expatriates and local pilots of the same rank is in consistent with our laws, particularly the Employment Relations Act (ERA) on unlawful discrimination in rates of remuneration for the same or substantial qualifications employed in the same or substantial similar circumstances, basically meaning “equal pay for work of equal value”?

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, this is the problem with the other side, a little knowledge is very dangerous for them. Madam Speaker, they are completely twisting the other context, firstly, he made a statement saying that we know there is a lot more expatriates in pilots, I have just said in Parliament here that there are 158 Fijian pilots, and there are 95 expatriate pilots.

Majority of the pilots within the Fiji Airways’ group are Fijians, now he wants to say it is not, but I have got the figures here, and I have just read it out.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is, firstly that is in the wrong premise; secondly, Madam Speaker, as has been highlighted and as I said in my opening statement, when you actually hire expatriates on any position, not just Fiji Airways or if you bring in the hotel industry (Honourable Gavoka worked in the hotel industry), everyone knows that that there are certain conditions that expatriates need to be paid for and they will not do it for locals, for example, housing. Fijians live here so we are not going to provide them with housing, some may get a housing allowance but the others will need to be topped up with the housing allowance because they come right from overseas.

This is the point that I am making, Madam Speaker, that any company that wants to look at its bottom line will need to weigh the cost and they will say, “All right, the reason why we are

bringing in this expatriate is because we do not have a local with that type of qualifications or that knowledge base.” Madam Speaker, when we have a local that was in charge of hedging in Fiji Airways, in one year when they hedged incorrectly they made a loss of \$96 million.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, they do not understand “hedging”. A person who knows about hedging will be able to anticipate world prices, that is the whole point about hedging, that is why we hedge. Do you not understand why we do hedging? Hedging is anticipatory cost involved in a particular commodity in this respect.

Madam Speaker, it is a completely different issue so they do not understand that the following year they made another \$76 million loss because they got the hedging wrong. Now if we had someone who is a hedging expert, has had 10, 15 or 20 years of experience in hedging, we would not have that issue. Now, it is correct to say that there are people within Fiji, there are probably no one in Fiji who has had 15 or 20 years’ worth of experience in hedging because we do not actually hedge in this market. So you have to get someone from outside because this airline company deals with international transactions, so you have to bring in people such as that. He is quoting the Employment Relations Act, he knows that that is completely false.

At the moment, you have people, for example, within the banking system in Fiji. Fijians have been paid different rates because someone has probably had more years of experience or somebody is a better performer so obviously they get a better rate. I mean that is nonsense to bring in that issue and say “This is a breach of ERA”, that is what we call, Madam Speaker, intellectual dishonesty.

In the same way, if we have someone, Madam Speaker, who is working in the hotel industry as a waiter, now then all of us maybe waiters on this side but some of us may be higher performers. So obviously the higher performer will get paid a higher rate, there is nothing in breach of ERA. What they are saying, just because everyone is a waiter, therefore everyone should get paid the same rate. So even then the waiter who has been there with 10 years’ experience, should be paid the same rate as the person who had just come in and become a waiter for one year. They are doing the same job, that is what he is saying, it is completely inappropriate, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just to straighten some facts, hedging was practised by most airlines during that period but no one anticipated that the price of oil would drop so significantly as we saw some years ago - from about \$110 per barrel to as low as about \$20 a barrel. So, no one anticipated that, but hedging was part of the global airline way of managing the oil prices. We got caught, so as other airlines.

But, Madam Speaker, the question to the Honourable Minister: there is a shortage of pilots looming in the world today, which has been articulated by the UN global aviation people because these pilots with Air Pacific, the Air Pacific expatriate pilots, will be taken by the airlines. There will be a shortage, a major shortage, so what are we doing about protecting ourselves in terms of getting the right number of pilots for Fiji Airways?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, just on the hedging, there are many airlines that were not burnt by hedging. Not all the airlines were burnt by hedging because there are very good people within those organisations that were actually able to anticipate and they had their

hedging done in an appropriate manner. It is not just because you have the fuel prices drop suddenly that you lose. It depends on how you actually package your hedge. There are very sophisticated products within the hedging market, Madam Speaker, so again they are getting into a space that they do not have much knowledge about.

Madam Speaker, what are we doing? As I have highlighted previously, we are putting in place a flight simulator school. It is anticipated to be completed by the middle of next year. We will have flight simulator schools, we are already giving TELS in that respect so we can get more Fijian pilots to be trained. There is a couple of flying schools here. So Madam Speaker, we have got Fiji Link, previously there was no connectivity or a progression line in the career paths. Now if you become a pilot, for example, from a flying school here, you can actually go through Fiji Link, to your Twin Otters, Regional Air Transport (ATRs), you can then get training for 737s and move on to Fiji Airways. So that flight progression has actually been put in place and obviously we are giving Tertiary Education Loan Scheme (TELS) in respect of that.

Also, we have set up a flight simulator school, which is what we are doing. We are building our own stockpile of pilots, Madam Speaker, but those stockpile of pilots need to be good pilots. We had a Fiji Airways pilot that did a very hard landing and broke the entire carriage of the A330, he was a Fijian pilot, do we continue with him, simply for the sake of the fact that he is a Fijian pilot so, Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is, let us not get into this emotional space about “No, have a fight against expatriates versus the Fijian personnel.”

We need to look at what is good for the organisation and the fact of the matter is that, Fiji Airways is the only enterprise that has some State-owned interest in it that actually has profit-sharing with its staff. If you go and ask all the staff at Fiji Airways, and say “Do you want to get a Fijian personnel for the sake of it or do you want to get the right person because at the end of the day, the bottom line will be better and you get a fair share of the profits.” They will say, “Let us get the best person for the job.” They are now shareholders in the sense they get a share of the profits. So, Madam Speaker, they need to understand that. This is all type of “smoke, bells and whistles” that they want to highlight so they can go along and say, “Don’t worry, when we come in, we will localise everything.” What nonsense, they will run the airline into the ground.

HON. P. SINGH.- A point of order.

HON. SPEAKER.- A point of order.

HON. P. SINGH.- I think the Acting Prime Minister is taking very cheap shots at the Opposition, and to my question, in particular. All I asked was, two people flying the same aircraft in the same cockpit, one a pilot and a co-pilot, how are they paid differently for the same work? That is what I asked, and he has gone all over the place, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The point of order does not qualify under the Point of Order process and I now give the floor to the Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar.

Current State of Laqere Market  
(Question No. 207/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport update the House on the current state of the Laqere Market and the benefits it will bring to the people around Nasinu?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member. Madam Speaker, as we are all aware that Nasinu Town Council is the largest municipality out of all the municipal councils in Fiji, and it took the FijiFirst Government to see the need to have a municipal market in Nasinu.

Madam Speaker, the Laqere Market is progressing well with the main building construction nearing completion; it is almost 85 percent done. The general interior fittings, including car park works are expected to commence next month, and the municipal market operation is expected to commence soon. The Laqere Market will have 400 vendors, 9 small kiosks and a fish market, including disabled friendly provisions.

Madam Speaker, I have been informed by the Nasinu Town Council that there is more demand for the stalls and I want to inform the House and assure all those who have applied that we will not disappoint them because we have enough land. We have provision for the expansion programme and upon request, we will make sure that we will extend the Nasinu Municipal Market.

Madam Speaker, right now the priority will be all those vendors who are selling on our roadsides. We have basically got the account of all the people who are selling on the roadside, almost 250 people right now. The salient features and the benefits of the projects will include:

- i) Much-expanded economic activity;
- ii) Hygienic selling environment; and
- iii) Meeting point for the people of Nasinu to promote their agricultural products as well.

Madam Speaker, Government is investing an estimate of around \$7 million towards the project which include land, car park and the construction of a modern facility. As mentioned earlier on, Madam Speaker, it will include economic outcomes and safer environment from weather, extreme events, and last but not the least, improve and increase the food security for the heavily urbanised population of our people in Nasinu. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Parmod Chand.

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question: can the Honourable Minister, please, assure this House having extolled this new venture that a robust EIA Report complete with the extensive consultation process for the new Laqere Market be tabled in this august House soon?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. We will do that.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Jiosefa Dulakiverata to ask his question.

Collection Centres for Farm Produce  
(Question No. 208/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, and Disaster Management and Meteorological Services inform the House, what plans are in place

to establish any farm gates in major agricultural centres of Fiji to help ease the access of market for our farmers?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, and Disaster Management and Meteorological Services).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can I just ask the Honourable Member to clarify whether he is referring to farm gate pricing, farm gate collection and then I can address his question because as it is, it does not make sense?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, it is a collection centre, instead of having to bring all your produce to the Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA), they can just have a collection centre where they can collect. Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member, it is much clearer now. The answer, Madam Speaker, yes, there are plans to have these collection centres to, of course, assist our farmer to access the markets. All Honourable Members of this House will recall that in the 2018 Budget, we have an allocation called the “Agro Processors Infrastructure Support Programme” additional to the National Exports Strategy and of course the Export Promotion Programme that is already in existence in the Ministry of Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources and the Ministry of Agriculture respectively, Madam Speaker.

Definitely the organising and the establishment of these collection centres are so important, Madam Speaker, but there are other factors that we need to take into consideration as we are addressing these issues.

Firstly, is the effort to organise production in the geographic regions. Fiji has vast challenges when it comes to market access. The maritime islands of Lomaiviti and Lau are all geographic regions with their own challenges but of course opportunities as well. Some of these islands, (let us refer first to the maritime islands) they have regular shipping or they are serviced by franchises or Government Shipping Services provides in between these services that are provided, but of course, within the main land as well, there are infrastructure issues, roading, bridges et cetera, but we are organising production now in terms of the geographic regions and then work with the development stakeholders to find out what is required so that we can ease this problem of market accessing in relation to the production regions. And of course Madam Speaker, together with Fiji’s land use classification we are trying now to do our best to allocate commodities according to the land specification.

We have been farming for a long time in Fiji and most of the farmers decide what crops they grow in the geographical regions but as we are trying now to modernise agriculture in Fiji, we want to guide our farmers, “these are best crops according to your soil classification” so that not everyone produces the same commodity and all of a sudden we flood the market. This is what we are organising; organising production in geographic regions. Together with that, Madam Speaker, we then need to organise the farmer groups, this is the key effort now I would say, starting from last year, this year and will continue to be the focus for the next few years.

I thank the question raised by the Honourable Member, Madam Speaker, because this is perhaps an opportune time for farmers and of course for all of us here as well to spread the message that because of the challenges of volume when it comes to production, I am specifically referring to small holder farmers because farmer classification, Madam Speaker, in Fiji we have commercial which is not much and then we have a few semi-commercial level operators but the majority of the farmers in Fiji are the small holder subsistence and even those who are living, we can say in farming settlements but their livelihood is from other sources. He can be in a small land but then just backyard

gardening and his has got a taxi, he is a fisherman. These are, what we can say that, perhaps survive more on non-farm economies rather than the farm itself. So, the small holder farmers, Madam Speaker, we are trying to organise them into these small groups. Why? Because one individual farmer when it comes to volume, most of them are unlikely to produce the volume that is necessary to entice the buyer to come to the farm gate, but when there are a group then we are just looking at the models that are already in existence, Madam Speaker.

It is easy to organise them into *tikina* and that involves all the farmers within the *tikina* but there are some farming areas, I will use Muainaweni for an example. They already have their farming communities, Lomaivuna as well, they already have their farming communities and because they do farming day in day out and most of these are semi-commercial farms. Cut the story short, Madam Speaker, we are trying to organise them into groups and I am thankful that farmers are beginning to understand why we need to organise them into groups.

From the Agriculture Extension perspective, Madam Speaker, this is also easier for agriculture because instead of running around all over the place, as every activity means cost, it is easy to provide technical advice, provide the supervisory role and of course organise the markets as well and this is exactly where we are heading; organising farming clusters. I have said this again, Madam Speaker, when we are organising these groups, there must be a market. This is one thing that is very, very critical now.

First we are looking at domestic markets, Madam Speaker. Not all farmers have the licence, the volumes and of course the infrastructure as well to export directly, but there are a few farming groups that are doing that already. In the absence of that, maybe those that already have export licence we can organise them. So organise them to the market and of course organise their commodities as well, Madam Speaker. I have talked about the geographic regions. Let us not spread ginger all over the place because in some places ginger does well but then in some places where there is very limited rainfall, ginger does not perform well. Madam Speaker, everything is driven by price and most of our farmers, “ginger price is good” so everyone goes into ginger, even now they are planting ginger in most parts of the Western Division. So we are trying to organise their commodities as well.

Another component in this, Madam Speaker, is of course pricing as well. Price is driven by the private sector, we are a free market economy. But this is why it is important that we organise them into groups because we have a component of the value chain, they are critical but most of the times we say that they necessary evil; these are middlemen. When we organise the farmers better it entices the buyer to come directly to the farm gate, hopefully we will get rid of the middlemen as well so that farmers can get the maximum benefit out of this. Perhaps two more, Madam Speaker, we need to look at their facilities as well; proper pack houses, crates and I have talked about agriculture being perishable. So when we are organising the groups, we are also looking at all their needs as well. And of course shared as well rather than buying chainsaws for every farmer within the group, maybe they can share this.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, the need for technology and whatever assistance they need as well. Hopefully, in the long term they will do some product development as well. We can collect all the rejects or the lower grade *dalo* from the farmers and they can have a small machine that does *dalo* starch or *dalo* flour. These are the things that we are looking at. But again, Madam Speaker, it is definitely there and there already clusters that are being formed, but it involves a bit of indoctrination and awareness so that we change the mindset of the farmers. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER. Honourable Ratu Kiliraki?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much to the Honourable Minister for the effort to enhance the agriculture sector. If you allow me to quote from *Fiji*

*Times* on 7th December, 2017 when the Honourable Minister was speaking at the closing of the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Improvement of Agriculture Statistics for Policy Workshop in Nadi that there is a lack of data that hinders growth. For what he has alluded to, it needs a lot of statistics and data. What is the effort of the Ministry towards the lack of data?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you ,Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for the question very, very relevant, Madam Speaker. I think that I have already briefed the Honourable House that just last month Fiji hosted the Asia Pacific Commission on Agriculture Statics. Fiji is the only country in the South West Pacific that is part of the Asia Pacific Commission on Agriculture Statics (APCAS), Madam Speaker. I must assure this honourable House that this has been our effort in the last three years. FAO funded this for us and although not all farmers are in the database, but I can say, Madam Speaker, that the majority of our farmers are now in the database. Why are not all farmers in the database, Madam Speaker? It is easy. We experienced as well when we came to collect database and we understand our farmers. Most of our extension officers were chased from the farm - what is this new activity?

But most of them did not understand. I think now in terms of the modernisation efforts most of them are now coming back to the Ministry of Agriculture because they know that we are beginning to focus now with the assistance, not only on individuals but more focus now on groups (the clusters) then most of those who were not initially registered are beginning to come. So, the last three years we have been working on our agriculture statistics.

We have a database now in the Ministry for Agriculture, Madam Speaker. If we click the farmer's name, all the records of the farmer will be there. The only thing that we are asking our farmers now, Madam Speaker, to work together particularly with our extension officers, to give us their yields because we do projections and forecasts. With this one acre, nine tonnes but then whether the factor and the quality of the Agro inputs, the soil quality and whatever, some may even do more, some may even less. So we need to investigate why? How did you arrive at this? This is what the data gives us now. It is a good planning tool which will help us better our services and most importantly increase productivity for our farmers. So, we have the database now for our livestock farmers and for our crop farmers.

The next step now, Madam Speaker, is to give them reference numbers. They have already been given reference numbers and then we will give them ID cards as well so that they are recognised and of course see that they are part of Government's development plans as well.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I thank the Honourable Minister for his explanation.

Madam Speaker, the rural farmers are very confused. They are told to plant more and yet there is no market. So, I want to ask the Honourable Minister, if the Ministry is urging people to plant more, who should be finding the market for them?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Farmers have the right to find their own markets and some of them prefer to do that, Madam Speaker. Despite all the information given to them, they still prefer to do their own marketing but then very disappointing,

Madam Speaker, sometimes when the deals do not go as arranged, then they rush back to the extension officers or come to the Agro Marketing Authority.

Madam Speaker, for farmers that are not serviced by exporters, middlemen, that is where the Agro Marketing Authority comes in.

We admit the fact, that, that used to be the practice and this is the shift. This is the way forward in terms of modernisation of agriculture. Before the farmer plants, we must ensure that there is a market but the challenge that we still have now, Madam Speaker, is when farmers do not honour the arrangements that are made prior to planting. Because it is all about, not only supply and demand but pricing as well.

We are slowly taking them towards contract farming, Madam Speaker. This group will supply to this buyer. But then another buyer comes in, I will you tell some story in Naitasiri, Madam Speaker. *Dalo* is already loaded to this buyer in Lami at \$4.50. And then another agent comes, Madam Speaker, he asks, "how much?" The villager says, "He is taking it at \$4.50." The agent says, "Offload it, we will take it for \$5.00." So everything is offloaded from here. But this is the guy that services them every week, but then just because of the supply and demand and the pricing is good, he stops servicing them, Madam Speaker, and then they go running around again because that was just a one-off purchase by the other buyer. This is the problem that we are facing. It takes a lot of effort, Madam Speaker. The mindset of our farmers must change. Once we organise them, lead them up to a market, we hope that they will maintain that relationship.

Of course, in terms of pricing as well, something that we have also discussed with the buyers to have that flexibility based on supply and demand. When it is high production period, when the price is low, maybe they should give reasonable prices but during the off season, when there is low supply and high demand, may be the price should be increased, so these are the things. It is about building relationships as well. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. I totally agree with the Honourable Minister when he says that the discipline amongst farmers and suppliers need to be on a more honest scale. Madam Speaker, I will give an example to the Honourable Minister. The areas in Fiji, particularly in the Western side: Nabitu in Sigatoka; Nasau in Votualevu, Nadi; and other places in Ba; they have designated areas for growing vegetables.

We know that the Ministry is encouraging the farmers to grow vegetables which are suitable on their land and, of course, with climatic conditions. They will not plant *duruka* that side on a large scale, but, Madam Speaker, what is the Ministry doing? We see that the Ministry has a lot of assistance to the farmers, now with this Agriculture Care in place, every farmer is being given the same seeds to plant in all these areas, so where is your Ministry coming from and what is the Ministry doing to control that?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I understand where the question is coming from - why are we giving the same seeds to the farmers? This is focusing on food security, Madam Speaker. The initial aim of the assistance to most of these farmers is just to improve on their food security, and then we look at their economic activities later on. That is why you will see that everyone will have cabbage seeds, for those that prefer *kumala* cuttings, everyone will have that. There is a standard package that we give everyone.

For commercial farmers, Madam Speaker, this in fact is why we went to the card system so that they can decide what they purchase according to their farming activity. That is the reason exactly why we have got into it. For some, may be their knapsack got damaged or their chainsaw, some need land clearing because the siltage is so high and they will have to do that. There are different requirements but in the areas where we are giving the same things, it is to address their food security issue, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula, a supplementary question.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- In Vaturova, the villagers there are sitting on their *dalo* and they are rotting because Agro-Marketing Authority (AMA) came there only once and disappeared. Could the Honourable Minister explain to us the problem with Agro-Marketing?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Speaker, thank you, let me just assure the Honourable Member that Agro-Marketing has shifted to Vanua Levu which has never been done before. We are now in Cakaudrove, in the old Magistrates' Building in Cakaudrove, everyone from Cakaudrove would know that building, Madam Speaker. So, Agro-Marketing is there now, and I have also mentioned in this honourable House that once we have the funding as well, we will move into Dama as well, so that we have two major collection centres in Vanua Levu.

But for Vaturova specifically, Madam Speaker, we have some complaints from the farmers in Vaturova but what we found out, Madam Speaker, again going back to the arrangements. It is the issue about farmers making their own arrangements and then when the buyer does not turn up and then most of them come rushing to AMA but we are looking at this seriously, Madam Speaker, because our programme is all inclusive and pro-poor. We do not want to leave anyone behind and, of course, Government's "Look North Policy" is there and, of course, we need to strengthen the "Look North Policy" and thus AMA is now decentralising, moving closer to the farmers to buy from the farmers in Vanua Levu. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Upcoming National Sports and Wellness Day  
(Question No. 209/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports inform the House of the upcoming National Sports and Wellness Day on 29th June, 2018?

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU (Minister for Youth and Sports) .- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Acting Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Members of the House: I must thank the Honourable Members for the question. Madam Speaker, when the National Sports Day was first promulgated as a public holiday, it was aimed at civil servants increasing their activity levels and promote good health and better diets.

Last year, the public holiday was changed to "National Sports and Wellness Day" by Cabinet and the focus has now changed to involve all Fijians, not only civil servants. Even more importantly, we are now focusing on getting the civil servants to support our communities getting active and having fun on this day as another aspect of our Government outreach programmes.

Madam Speaker, “2017 National Sports Day and Wellness Day” was a transitional one as many civil servants still competed with their Ministry but we also included over 50 venues around the country where our citizens were physically active and had fun. We want the members of the public to internalise the importance of maintaining good health and wellbeing through sports and physical activity. This is our clear focus, Madam Speaker, for 2018.

We are rolling out the programme to all our communities as physical activity is now a clear focus. We hope to involve everyone to promote a mass participation in sports and physical activity and moving away from competition.

Madam Speaker, a national coordinating committee liaises very closely with the divisional committees. The divisional committees coordinate the programmes in the individual divisions ensuring all centres identified as accommodated with their budgetary needs to successfully run their programmes.

Madam Speaker, currently the Ministry with its stakeholders for the National Sports and Wellness Day are finalising the locations of the celebration. The stakeholders include municipal councils, schools and sports facility owners as they are earmarked as venues for the celebration. The Ministry is working with representatives from all the Ministries to assist in spreading awareness, not only on the civil servants, but to the respective communities as well.

Madam Speaker, the national coordinating committee is also working closely with the Ministry of Information in promoting the whole month of June as the “Wellness Month” with the celebration on 29th June, 2018. Last year, there were 54 small centres that was alluded before, that joined and celebrated the National Sports and Wellness Day and we are anticipating more centres this year.

Madam Speaker, I would kindly request the Honourable Member to play our part and start spreading the word that June will be the Wellness Month with the climax being held on the 29th. I would like to encourage us all to start from within our respective families and communities promoting sports and physical activities for good health. We need to use the opportunity, Madam Speaker, as we do with all other public holidays to bring our people together to have fun for this one, to develop respect, mutual support and new energy while increasing our physical activity levels. However, this cannot be a one-day affair. We think of June to be the month of “Wellness and Sports Day” culminating on the 29th.

So I welcome all Honourable Members of the House, if they get their youths in settlements and *tikinas* to come with both rural and urban youths to organise this national “Sports and Wellness Day” with their programmes and report to their divisional or community members who now have been allocated around all over Fiji. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Parmod Chand.

HON. P. CHAND.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplementary question.

HON. SPEAKER.- A supplementary question.

HON. P. CHAND.- We have been observing this public holiday for a few years now. The question is, can the Honourable Minister detail how effective this holiday has been nationally in reducing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) or amputations caused by NCDs such as diabetics as we should not just have public holidays that just sound nice and come and go but should impact national productivity and wellness somehow?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Yes, in 2015 we became one of the NCD country. I mean Fiji became second in the meeting in Tonga. But now, we have become the third country, that means awareness and the programmes are going well and it is getting effective. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplementary question, I thank the Honourable Minister for the submission this morning. My question to the Minister is: is there a budget allocated for that day and how much is allocated to spend on that day, the 19<sup>th</sup>? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I must thank the Honourable Member. Yes, the budget is allocated but I cannot tell you the figure right now. It has been decentralised to communities and the divisional managers are controlling the budget but I can get all the figures back to the Honourable Members. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- A supplementary question.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Is there any provision for assistance to access sports gears like volleyball nets, volleyball for group sports for the day?

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Madam Speaker, I must thank the Honourable Member. Yes.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There being no other question, I now give the floor to the Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni to ask her question.

Reviving Extension Services to Maritime Islands  
(Question No. 210/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries explain to the House if there are any plans to revive the Extension Services of the Ministry to the maritime islands?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU (Minister for Fisheries).- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. Madam Speaker, I wanted to ask if there can be clarification on the question that has been posed here.

The Honourable Member is talking about revival. Revival normally occurs if there is a suffocation or if there is a stoppage somewhere.

We have never really had any problems with the Extension Services of Fisheries to the islands. Does she want me to explain something that is not existing? This is the problem with the Opposition. They come in here and talk about plans. We are not talking about plans, we are talking about actions.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hear, hear!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- So, she better clarify what issue she wants me to explain to answer that question because it does not exist. If you are asking for revival, then there must be an existing problem or suffocation within the Extension Services, there has never been any.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Madam Speaker, my question is regarding the ice plants. In the islands, we used to have a lot of ice plants, now there are no ice plants, people do not know where to go. I am just asking this question because of the extension of our economic zone. We have got a lot of resources and today we need to be resource-based, that is my question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- That was not a point of order but, Honourable Minister, would you like to answer the question?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, if she wants me to explain all the activities within the maritime islands, then I will do it, but she does not come into this Honourable House and make a claim that the extension service is dead and needs revival. If she wants me to explain all the services that have been carried out in the maritime islands, I will explain.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, the question has been agreed to by the Business Committee, so I will allow you to answer it in any way you want.

Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to affirm to this Honourable House that the Ministry of Fisheries has continued to improve services to our maritime islands. In total, there are nine maritime Fisheries officers that are located in Kavala, Vunisea in Kadavu, Levuka, Gau, Vanua Balavu, Kadavu, Taveuni, Rabi and Rotuma. Out of these nine stations, the recent ones are in Gau which was opened in 2016 and Rotuma in 2017.

Madam Speaker, in this current financial year, the Government has provided funds to establish two new Fisheries stations. The Extension Stations in Cicia and Moala are already under construction.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, these stations operate to provide services to these isolated islands. Services are provided in the form of:

- 1) licensing and ice sales;
- 2) conducting meetings and consultations on fisheries matters;
- 3) providing fisheries advice to communities;
- 4) training on fisheries programmes;
- 5) data collection; and
- 6) assistance through surveillance and surface patrols.

Apart from these, Madam Speaker, there are other new initiatives that are being developed which include the establishment of fishing associations which help promote collaboration between fishers and the Government to boost compliance.

In total, there are 11 Fishermen's Associations set up across a number of islands such as Kadavu, Lau and the Lomaiviti Group. These Fishermen's Associations are fully operational and there is an expansion plan to cover the rest of the islands in Fiji.

Additionally, on the introduction of new fishing techniques, there have been training conducted in rural and maritime areas on the deployment of Fishing Aggregating Device (FAD). I have addressed this in the House in the past Parliament sessions on the matter of our officers who are currently conducting FAD monitoring in various sites as we speak.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, our stations have engaged communities with new training programmes. These training programmes include fibre glass and engine maintenance, best post-harvest practices on fish-handling and value-adding.

Madam Speaker, these are just simple, yet focused initiatives. Over the coming months, more initiatives through our partners will be delivered to these locations. These initiatives will allow us to help contribute in the growth of knowledge in rural and maritime communities. This, in turn, would help to improve livelihoods which ensures resource sustainability. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niumataiwalu.

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- A supplementary question.

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, can I ask the Honourable Minister to inform this August House, whether there is any initiative to address the revitalisation of Wainikoro Fishing Co-op located in the remote of the North Eastern coast of Vanua Levu? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Wainikoro situation has resulted in mismanagement of the funds that were allocated to the Association for purchasing the marine products and then selling it off and then taking the profit as part of their collateral in continuing to run the Association. Basically, I have had discussions with them that the Ministry can provide some funding to assist them on the loan scheme which they need to replenish. It is the mismanagement that caused the collapse of that scheme.

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

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. Reflecting on the comments made on data collection and the importance of understanding fishing activities in contrast of available stock, can the Honourable Minister explain the means of data collection that are practised in coastal Fisheries with clear emphasis on how the Ministry of Fisheries is working to improve on this? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

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

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member has stated it correctly indicating that data is important for the proper Fisheries management. Over the years, the Ministry of Fisheries has used marine resources inventory survey and market survey and monthly fishermen catch records to assess the stock that have been harvested against what is available. While the information received is worthwhile, the Ministry of Fisheries is conducting work to improve the standard of data collected.

Madam Speaker, when addressing the issue of data standard, an important question that needs to be answered is: what is the minimum data required to enable a viable data platform? This Madam Speaker, is something that the Ministry of Fisheries is working on and I am happy to inform the Honourable House of its progress. In terms of Fisheries Log Books, the Ministry of Fisheries is developing a daily catch log which will record the following:

- Data;
- Date;
- Time and tide of the fishing operation;
- Location in which gears were dropped;
- Type of gear and how many were used;
- Breakdown of species caught;
- Amount of species retained, released or discarded; and
- Number of crew that were part of the fishing trip.

Those are the major issues that will be collated in the data.

Madam Speaker, this new information initiative would be mandatory to all fishers that are licensed to fish commercially. This will allow the Ministry of Fisheries to improve on the quality of data available while ensuring that management decisions are based on the best science available. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Mikaele Leawere, you have the floor.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplementary question: most of the ice-plants around the country, especially in the maritime areas are out-dated and need replacements, some of them are old. Are there any plans to replace them with new ice plants, for example, Nabouwalu, when we came that day there was no ice, so the plant must not have been working when we came? 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. Yes, most of the ice plants around the country are on the average of 16 to 18 years old and most of the ice plants were donated by NGOs or governments that we co-operate with. There is a plan to replace all the ice plants that are over the viable financial life for that to be replaced and we are looking at replacing them. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Alvick Maharaj.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, a supplementary question: can the Honourable Minister inform the House on the transport challenges faced by the fishermen in maritime islands and the strategies that have been identified to address this? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. Madam Speaker, transportation is a major challenge when working with maritime islands, as it determines the frequency of community visitations by Fisheries Officers and the marketing of Fisheries commodities to the main centres. In some areas, ferry travels once a month, with fortunate islands getting twice a week. A few of the islands have airstrips or flights travel to these islands once or twice a week. Furthermore, the geographical location of these islands results in limited access to markets which in turn lead to restriction in economic benefits to fishermen.

Madam Speaker, to address the problem of transportation of fish, the Ministry of Fisheries has begun development projects to help mitigate the issue. First, through the establishment of Fishermen's Association, the Ministry of Fisheries has started a project on solar freezers. The provision of solar freezers will enable fishers in rural and maritime communities to store their catch whilst catch in the solar freezer and resell to buyers with a mark-up price when the transport is available. This is an advantage to fishermen as they are able to receive money in a timely manner while their Association gets the benefit from storage cost prior to sales.

Madam Speaker, an example of this was carried out by the Veilomani Fishermen's Association in Moturiki. The Association bought fish from its members for \$15 per bundle and sold it to consumers or middlemen at \$20 a bundle.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, with the Government collection programme, Fisheries is able to provide transportation through its vessel, *Tuiniwasabula*, to collect fish from the Association and transport it to the main market in Suva. The collection that was done in Batiki saw 14 fishermen gain the monetary value of \$2,544 for 530 kilograms of fish that were supplied in a single night. Madam Speaker, these are small, yet progressive steps are undertaken by the Ministry of Fisheries to address the issue of transport faced by our rural and maritime communities. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Kiliraki?

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

HON. SPEAKER.- A supplementary question.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Yes, the extension services have been there since the 1970s, 1980s where we used to have the *Gonedau* and later the *Tuiniwasabula* where fish are collected from the islands. There are big reefs out there like Yagasa and Bukatatanoa where the villagers are taken there on the concept like National Marketing Authority (NMA), now AMA, so whether the Ministry of Fisheries is considering that concept towards the reviving of NMA and taking all the fishermen to exploit all these resources that are available there. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. I admit and I agree that Fisheries stations have been there for 20 to 30 years, I do not deny that.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Do not respond to interjections.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- The collection scheme, as I have already alluded to, we have two vessels; one vessel has a capacity of 30,000 kilogrammes - *Tuiniwasabula* and *Bainitakali* – one has 15 tonnes capacity in one whole; and another one has 25 tonnes capacity, so that is about 55 tonnes that can be collected by *Bainitakali*. The problem is, the consistency of supply will allow this ship to run to Lau, have sufficient fish to be collected and viable for him to be brought back and sold in the market.

The consistency of supply is the major issue here, we have the vessels, I have already visited Lau, I have visited Vanua Levu, all the maritime islands on the North. Next week, I will be going to Yasawa, and I will be leaving on Sunday evening. I have visited the whole of Lomaiviti, the whole of Kadavu. Some issues that have been raised by them that it is much more return if they sell it at the spot. And if the we take the sellers across to buy it at the spot, they will buy it at about \$6.50. But they are able to sell it to the people that sell in the market in the ferry areas where the ferries come in and out; they will be able to sell them at about \$9 per kilogramme. So, to run a ship just to go there and then they have sold available catch to the local market, then there is no viability in it. We cannot run a ship and then come back empty. That is the whole issue.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Akaoula Niumataiwalu.

HON. M.A. NUMATAIWALU.- Supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, considering the capital costs associated with the establishment of Fish Collection Centres and the initiative on solar freezers as just mentioned by the Honourable Minister. Can the Honourable Minister inform this House on the benefits of such initiatives to both maritime communities and the Government?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for the question. As I already alluded to, while it is a fact that the isolation of maritime islands provide its setbacks, the establishment of Fish Collection Centres and solar freezers ensures the economic technical social and environmental benefits.

For economic benefits, maritime communities are able to maximise economic return for individual and fishing associations. The projection indicates that there would be more financial savings for fishermen when an association buys their fish. This purchasing arrangement leads to less operations cost for the fishermen, middlemen and the Government which then will increase individual wealth which contributes to Fisheries' GDP.

Madam Speaker, for technical benefits, these initiatives support a well-equipped and functional programme that helps produce and maintain fresh fish products. This leads to well managed fisheries resources through collaboration with our communities. It will further support the documentations of catch per unit data that can be used to establish fisheries management policies and applied fisheries research. Additionally, the collective approach allows local fishermen to be involved in the establishment of long term for maximum sustainable yield and maximum economic yield for inshore fisheries.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, through this programme, communities will become knowledgeable. There will be employment opportunities within the maritime communities whilst recognising the participation of local fishermen. Madam Speaker, the programme will further contribute to the implementation of conservation measures through an effective monitoring control and surveillance system approach. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

High Demand for Fingerlings  
(Question No. 211/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries inform the House on the initiatives undertaken by the Ministry to address the high demand for fish fingerlings from our *tilapia* fish farmers?

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

Madam Speaker, *tilapia* fish is one of our most important target species for farm fish production. It is vital for food security and improving livelihoods for our rural and inland farmers. There is close to 500 *tilapia* farmers in Fiji now.

The Government hatchery at Naduruloulou Research Station currently supplies fingerlings to about 95 percent of these farmers. Recently, we have focused on new technologies and methods to boost production in order to meet rising demands from farmers.

Our production capacity is currently around 1 million fingerlings annually. However, the demand from farmers is double that amount. We are currently trying two methods of fingerling production and they are incubator system and *hapa* breeding method. Both these methods increase efficiency and survival rate of the fingerlings and leads to increased production.

While the incubator system is set up at the NRS hatchery, the *hapa* breeding method has been successfully trialled and is being used in places such as Montfort Boy's Town and Nausori Village to stock up their own pools. There is a high interest from other farmers to access and use this method. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Samuela Vunivalu.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplementary question. What arrangements have been put in place to create awareness among all local farmers to access this service? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The Ministry has a training and awareness programme. The awareness is carried out during national events and road shows, while our training programme is carried out in every division. Madam Speaker, furthermore, we are being assisted by SPC in this programme. They work closely with the Ministry in terms of providing training and *hapa* materials

to all farmers and communities and there are also plans in motion to take this service to other parts of Fiji such as Vanua Levu with our North-based farmers and they can benefit from this service. We have already revived Dreketi Fisheries Station Hatchery and are currently using the *hapa* method breeding there to produce *tilapia* fingerlings for the farmers in the Northern Division. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplementary question. What plans does the Ministry have in place to continue this programme for continued benefit by fish farmers? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. The Ministry of Fisheries will continue creating awareness and taking out training programmes to all the farmers in Fiji. We will also work closely with our donors and development partners, especially in procuring funding and materials to take the *hapa* breeding method to most of our farmers in Fiji.

The simplicity of the *hapa* breeding method means that it can be taken to even the most remote farmers where farmers produce their own fingerlings and do not have to rely on distribution from the Government hatchery. We are working with SPC to form *tilapia* farm clusters in the Central, Western and Northern Divisions. We intend to share cost, share ideas, share equipment and transportation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Supplementary question. If *tilapia* is a priority for the Government, I think we need to also understand the nutritional value of our people as well as the risk, such as the latest *tilapia* lake virus that the Food and Agricultural Organisation had warned us about in June 2017. This is worrying, Madam Speaker, what steps are being taken by the Ministry to address this?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have our own scientific team within the Ministry that looks into this. We have never come across the problem that has been highlighted by the Honourable Member. If he has witnessed any issues on the problem, then he can pass it to me and I will take it to our scientific team.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Alivereti Nabulivou.

HON. A. NABULIVOU.- Thank you. Supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. A. NABULIVOU.- How will the farmers benefit from these types of breeding?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. Quality fingerlings supply in a tarpaulin manner is one of the main challenges faced by Naduruloulou Research Station Hatchery. We have been using the old method of *tilapia* breeding such as:

- knock-out test; and
- direct collection from ponds.

These methods were both time consuming and the mortality rate was high due to excess handling of fish during their transfer causing stress. With the incubator and *hapa* breeding method, both the survival rate increases and mortality rate is reduced leaving a high number of fingerlings that can be reared for distribution to the farmers. While the incubator system needs electricity to operate, the *hapa* breeding method is very easy and requires low technology. The *hapa* system is also ideal for farmers to setup their own farm ponds and carry out their own fish breeding. This not only ensures that they get ready supply of fingerlings, they can also sell these fingerlings to neighbouring farmers. Madam Speaker, I have the diagrams of *hapa* with me here and if anyone is interested to try it out, I can provide the copy for that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Supplementary question.

HON. A.M. RADRODDRO.- Apart from the awareness exercise that has been taken, how does a new tilapia fish farmer access the assistance given by the Ministry to construct a new fish pond?

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 very easy process because we layout this for food security. Any interested *tilapia* farmer just needs to come to our office and make an application. This is an allocation for my annual budget for food security, once the application has been lodged, our technical team will go and inspect the area that they intend to farm in, make sure that it is viable to be farmed for *tilapia*.

Once that is proved to be a good area to farm *tilapia*, our team will go down there and dig the pond for them and our Ministry will also provide feed until their first harvest. After their first harvest, they can then sell the excess and then that will provide the finance for the feed on the repeat farming that they will carry out. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I note from the statement made by the Honourable Minister that there are 500 farmers who are breeding *tilapia*, do we have an indication of what the yield would be per farmer? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do not have that data with me here but I can state the fact that most of this assistance provided by Government for food security, the priority for them is to make sure that they have enough source of protein for them for their daily lives. And if they have any excess then they can sell that to provide income generation and support their other avenues of financial contributions within their community. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other question, I will now give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki to ask his question.

Removal of Sunken Ships - Levuka Wharf & Ovalau Resort  
(Question No. 212/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport inform the House if there are any commitments to remove the sunken vessels in Levuka Wharf and in front of the Ovalau Resort?

HON. P.B. KUMAR (Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment, Infrastructure and Transport).- Thank you, Madam Speaker and I thank the Honourable Member. Madam Speaker, before I respond to the Honourable Member, I wish to go back to the request made by the Honourable Parmod Chand on the report. My yes is subject to that I will need to check with the Nasinu Town Council on that. I just want to put it on record. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member and I wish to clarify that any sunken vessel within the port boundary is the responsibility of the Fiji Ports Corporation Limited as stated under the Sea Ports Management Act 2005, which includes *MV Sinu-i-Wasa 1* that is at the wharf. So in this case, I will speak for *MV Sinu-i-Wasa 3*, (there is *Sinu-i-Wasa 1* and *Sinu-i-Wasa 3*) because it is out of the port boundary.

Madam Speaker, as a result of *TC Winston*, *Sinu-i-Wasa 3* is still stuck into the solid rocks. In this case, the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF) will oversee the removal of this wreck as the incident had occurred outside the declared port boundary.

For the information of the House, Madam Speaker, MSAF has issued a removal notice to the ship-owner and both parties have discussed the removal of this ship. The ship-owner has engaged a company for the removal of the ship and had purchased equipment from overseas to assist with the operations.

Madam Speaker, the owner has also requested for some time because that ship needs to be cut and removed. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niumataiwalu.

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- A supplementary question, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- A supplementary question.

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- Thank you. I wish to ask the Honourable Minister to inform this House if there is any plan for Labasa Town in regards to the second bypass in and out of the town to ease traffic jams daily? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- I thank him, he is a new Member, I respect him, but he can bring a new question in the next sitting. That has got nothing to do with this.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. A supplementary question: as far as *Sinu-i-Wasa 3*, that is beached right in front of the village, was there any compensation that goes to the damages for these two villages: Vatukalo and Toki? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have been informed by MSAF that there has been a discussion between the *vanua* and the shipowner, so there has been talks going on and they have made their own arrangements. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prem Singh.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- A supplementary question.

HON. P. SINGH.- I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. I would just like to know whether there are any financial penalties for vessel owners who destroy oceans like this with sunken ships, spillage, even particularly when they are outside of the Ports ambit.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- There is, Madam Speaker, and if it is not adhered to the notice that is given by MSAF then the next stage is that, the matter goes to court and that is where it is decided. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. There being no other question, we will now move on to the next item. I now call on the Honourable Aseri Radrodoro to ask his written question.

### Written Questions

#### Land Bank Unit (Question No. 213/2018)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources provide the following -

- (a) the total number and details of leases banked at the Land Bank Unit; and
- (b) how many of these land banked at the Land Bank Unit have been returned to landowners?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- (Acting Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources).- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for this question and the answer will be provided as provided for under the Standing Orders.

Total Inward Personal Remittances  
(Question No. 214/2018)

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

Fiji's total inward personal remittances in 2016 rose by 10.2 percent from 2015 to reach a new record level of \$541.8 million. Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications provide the list of countries of origin of these remittances and the amount remitted from each country?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications).-Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for the question and the answer will be provided for as provided for in the Standing Orders.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you and question time is now over. We move on to the next item on the Order Paper, Secretary General.

**END OF WEEK STATEMENTS**

HON. SPEAKER.- For the information of Honourable Members, the Member may speak up to 10 minutes with a 10-minute response by the relevant Minister responsible. There will be no other debate.

I now call on the Hon. Parmod Chand to deliver his statement.

Review of Free Medicine Scheme

HON. P. CHAND.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to present my End of Week Statement on the review of Free Medicine Scheme. This statement will highlight the shortfalls and suggest the need to review the Free Medicine Scheme.

Madam Speaker, the Free Medicine Programme was announced in the 2015 National Budget that was announced on 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2014 to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015.

“Turning promises into deeds” was the Budget theme. One of the promises of FijiFirst was the provision of providing all price control prescribed medicines that would be prescribed by doctors, even for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), for those earning less than \$20,000 per annum.

Later, when the scheme was rolled out, a Ministry of Health circular clearly stated that those who qualified for the scheme are adults over 18 years of age earning less than \$20,000 per annum, and individuals less than 18 years old, if their combined parental income is less than \$20,000 per annum.

Madam Speaker, firstly when the scheme was implemented, only 70 price controlled medicines were listed as free medicine, which was eventually increased to 142 prescribed price controlled medicine from 2016.

Secondly, the contradiction in eligibility requirements for the scheme is abundantly clear. For example, if both parents in a home earn \$19,000 per annum each, both qualify for free medicine. However, their children under the age of 18 years will not qualify even if they do not

earn a cent, or a student because the combined parental income is \$38,000 per annum or more than that \$20,000 stipulated as a qualifying criteria.

So the parents will get free medicine for whatever is worthwhile, their children will not and this is illogical, unfair and discriminatory. It is just like the FijiFirst promise to continue maintaining zero VAT on seven basic food items and medicines. This free medicine scheme has seen a promise turn into a misdeed. At the last count that I am aware of, around 25,000 people were benefitting from free medicine.

This is similar to the Fiji Electricity Authority subsidy being hailed as free electricity, or even free water when it is actually a subsidy. Of course, this number may have increased, but it is certainly not proportionate to the segment of our population living in poverty by Government's own statistics.

Madam Speaker, while more than 28 percent of our population live in poverty and thousands of others earn less than \$20,000 annually, one wonders why the numbers are not significantly higher if the scheme is so highly beneficial as it is made out to be by Government.

The answer is bureaucracy, Madam Speaker. Just as one spends an average of \$30 running around to get his or her documentation in order to qualify for the water subsidy or the electricity subsidy, so too does an individual eligible for this scheme.

Electricity subsidy, when it was initially announced would have resulted in a saving of \$19.08 in one year. This subsidy may have increased but is still far less than what people thought. The water subsidy of 91.25 units will save you \$13.96 within one year.

Free prescribed basic medicine will save you a maximum of \$400 in one year if you are sick for most days in a year and need prescribed price controlled generic medicine for more than 150 days in one year. That is indeed far-fetched because any worker has a maximum of either 18 or at least at the most 21 days sick leave each year.

Therefore, the bureaucracy and inability to get all prescribed medicine for free is a huge hindrance and an additional burden to already over-stretched pockets. Madam Speaker, the retail pharmacies have been forced to participate in the free medicine scheme because if they do not, they are liable to be slapped with a \$100,000 fine and this is again simply irrational and unjust.

Retailed pharmacies have to provide space to store the free medicine on whatever stock is supplied then their staff have to manually record recipient's details and also that of the prescription, all this is done manually. They do not have direct access to the Ministry of Health Service to electronically ascertain the eligibility of the recipient, but manually record details of his or her card. The electronic link to the Ministry of Health database was promised by Government almost four years ago but has not been fulfilled.

Worse still, Madam Speaker, pharmaceutical staff have to tolerate abuse when told medication prescribed by the doctors is either not available or is not listed as a free medicine. We have established that in many retail pharmacies, the full list of 142 medicines is not available because they were not supplied in the first place despite being generic medicine.

Madam Speaker, one pharmacy in Suva, which is one of the busiest and strategically located, only had 50 of the 142 listed medicines.

Furthermore, our investigations have established that there is only one designated staff at the Fiji Pharmaceutical Services who looks after the stock of 52 retail pharmacies. That is why stocks get either depleted or expire when not used.

Recently, Madam Speaker, there was a case of \$15,000 worth of insulin under free medicine scheme expiring in retail pharmacies when in actual fact, stocks had run out in hospitals and patients were told there was no insulin in stock.

Madam Speaker, quite simply and forthrightly, the free medicine scheme is in a shambolic state and needs to be reviewed urgently to bring about efficiency and to ensure it is fully maximised by all those eligible recipients.

We, therefore, urge Government to:

1. Change the eligibility criteria so that individuals under 18 years of age, who are mostly students, are able to access this scheme, irrespective of their parents' joint income reaching the maximum threshold of \$40,000. If they earn \$20,000 and themselves individually qualify for the scheme.
2. Equip pharmacies with computers or if not link one of their computers to the Ministry's database of eligible recipients.
3. Remove the list of 142 free medicines and implement a truly genuine free medicine scheme where those eligible can access any medicine as prescribed by the doctor, thus removing the risk of medicine being either overstocked, under-supplied or expiring.

This will remove the need to supply pharmacies with a list of generic medicines, who in turn can dispense medication from their own stock and send bills monthly to the Ministry of Health for payment, eradicating both patient and pharmacy frustration and giving true meaning through free medicine.

Madam Speaker, it is very important that we look at the Scheme very very carefully and thoroughly. We sincerely hope Government takes on board our suggestions for the delivery of a genuine free medicine scheme. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the responsible Minister to give the right of reply. Honourable Acting Prime Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Free Medicine Scheme and the statistics provided by Honourable Parmod cannot be relied upon because we know from past history the inability for us to be able to rely on those statistics because invariably, it is always incorrect. However, Madam Speaker, the Free Medicine Scheme prior to it being implemented, any Fijian, irrespective of their income, if they went to the hospital they actually got medicine for free.

If the doctor went in and if you went to the Outpatient Department and you have a bandage, you get the bandage for free, they gave you some tablets, you got it for free.

The expansion of the Free Medicine Scheme, Madam Speaker, was to expand those services into the private pharmacies, so it makes it easier for individuals to be able to go to the pharmacies and also pick up the drugs from there because there were some people sometimes who may not actually go to the hospital, the public hospital. They may actually go to the private doctor and then when they went to the private doctor, should the medicine prescribed by the

private doctor be one of those medicines that is actually in the list of free medicine, they could go to the pharmacy and pick it up from there, that was to cater for that.

Of course, Madam Speaker, when it first started off, the medicine list was about 72 items and then, of course, it was revised up to 142 because we saw it fit to include more medicines on the list.

Madam Speaker, the pharmacies, actually all pharmacies and pharmacists who are in the private sector should play a role in the social corporate responsibility space. As I mentioned yesterday, Madam Speaker, insurance companies have, for a long period of time, been allowed to get away by actually only participate in the space which they think they can get big profits. The pharmacies, Madam Speaker, actually do make lots of money by selling other products too, so it is a very small requirement for them to be able to participate and provide free medicine.

We have continuously said in this Parliament, Madam Speaker, that like with all new schemes, we need to be able to ensure that there is constant revision of it and, yes, of course, there are fundamental issues that need to be constantly improved like any administrative scheme, you need to constantly review and the free medicine scheme is something that is being reviewed and as highlighted in Parliament before, we are trying to get the software, we are working with the Indian Government to get all of these pharmacies connected, to get the Government Pharmacy itself connected because there has been issues in respect, not only between the private pharmacies, but within the hospital system themselves, with open incentives.

Honourable Chand keeps on harping all about it as if we have said anything will not improve anything. There have been issues in respect of, for example, an over-supply of a particular drug say in Sigatoka Pharmacy because it has not been used as much but if there is, for example, a diarrhoea outbreak in Nadi, there is usage of a particular drug of quite a lot of it. When you go to Nadi, say there is a low supply of it, it is because there has been a huge demand perhaps there is a break-out of diarrhoea in Nadi. So they need to be simply able to look at the chain of supply - the logistics, and it requires sophisticated computers, et cetera, and software to be able to monitor these drugs, and that is something that has been worked upon.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, with the free medicine scheme, we are going to do that with the private pharmacies and we have also highlighted in Parliament previously, in Parliament but more so outside, Madam Speaker, about how we are looking at improving the systems, in the same way, we spoke to the bus operators as I have mentioned to them the other day.

Currently, under the arrangements with the bus operators, Madam Speaker, they have agreed when we gave them the VAT component to keep a certain percentage, that there are certain passengers, the disabled and elderly, that they actually carry for free on subsidised rates. As I have mentioned to the Association to the various operators there that Government is currently looking at how we should actually pay the full fare on their behalf, on behalf of the citizens will be the bus operators who will be carrying a lot better system, so the bus operators get disbursed for that, and of course, things like e-ticketing, things like better monitoring system will help. You need to have the software behind that.

Similarly with the free medicine scheme, Madam Speaker, we are currently working with various projects, the Acting Permanent Secretary for Health is working on that as to how we can improve it by introducing, not only the software that is required for it, but also to be able to establish the chain of supply and the logistics behind it.

So, Madam Speaker, it is being worked upon, there has been a lot of people, Madam Speaker, you know that the reason why they have not come out and registered, by looking at a figure of 31,000 people, it does not mean only 31,000 people are getting it. It is incorrect to say that the children do not get free medicine. If a child goes to a hospital then of course, they get free medicine, it is nonsense to say that. This is the kind of intellectual dishonesty they come and present to Parliament and because, Madam Speaker, only 31,000 people have registered, it does not mean that only 31,000 people get it.

If you go to every single person that goes to a public hospital, they get free medicine. Even though they are registered or not registered, these people who have come out and registered are the ones who have actually used their registration to go and use their registration at private pharmacies, that is what it is about, and he is not saying that.

These people are in the Election-nearing mode, Madam Speaker, that is the problem.

HON. MEMBER.- You are.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is the problem, Madam Speaker, so the quality and level of debate in this Parliament over the past four or five days has been abysmal, has been abysmal from the other side. This motion was about this - "End of Week Statement", Madam Speaker, Honourable Nawaikula got caught out about Fiji Pine.

Madam Speaker, this End of Week Statement is about free medicine, he went into electricity, he went into water, Madam Speaker, so the fact of the matter is that here is a Government that is trying to address the issue of the supply of drugs and accessibility of drugs for ordinary Fijians, not only through the public health system, but also through the private pharmacies and requires constant review. Yes, the pharmacists have made very short presentations. I hope they have not become a lobby group from private pharmacists, they have made representations to us, we were talking to them about it, Madam Speaker. We have also, Madam speaker, in the review process, we are looking at the procurement of medicines and the supply of medicines, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, furthermore as I have highlighted information systems pertaining to the supplier of drugs is very, very important.

Madam Speaker, most people in this Parliament even will never use more than 147 drugs. The other drugs that are actually highly in demand were specialised drugs. But the 147 actually has been expanded list of drugs.

So, Madam Speaker, it is you know preposterous to say that somehow or the other represent that this Free Medicine Scheme is caught in the 'gytime warp', it is not. It has constantly been changing. They care caught in a time warp. They think that everything that they have done or the statement they have been making will remain the same, no? We are moving ahead with it and the review will constantly continue to ensure that we get a better supply of drugs, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now give the floor to the Honourable Jiosefa Dulakiverata to deliver his statement.

### Effects of the Land Use Act

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to take this opportunity to speak on the Land Use Act and its effect on the landowners and wish to thank this House for this opportunity.

Madam Speaker, the *iTaukei* Land as defined in the *iTaukei* Land Act of 1905 is land which is neither State land nor the subject of a State grant nor *iTaukei* grant but includes all vacant land including such land set aside by Proclamation under Section 18 of the *iTaukei* Land Trust Act and all extinct *mataqali* land vested in the board.

Madam Speaker, Section 4, Part 2 of the *iTaukei* Land Act clearly states and I quote:

“The control of all *iTaukei* lands shall be vested in the board and all such land shall be administered by the board for the benefit of the *iTaukei* landowners or for the benefit of the *iTaukei*”.

The question that I wish to raise by way of this statement, Madam Speaker, if all the land are vested in the board, then why is there a need for the Land Use Policy?

Madam Speaker, the object of the Land Use Decree is to utilise the designated land in a manner that is in the best interest of the *iTaukei* landowners and with the view of achieving optimal return to the State.

Madam Speaker, it is not in the best interest of the *iTaukei* landowner to give his land for long term leases. They only benefit here is the rental return from the land.

One of the fundamental principles of native land ownership is to provide benefits and sustenance for the current and future generations.

Under Section 10 of the Land Use Decree, Madam Speaker, all leases issued under each provision shall be for a period of 99 years.

Most of the land given to the Land Bank are agricultural land and under the Agricultural Landlord Tenants Act of 1976, agricultural leases issued under this Act have a maximum terms of 30 years.

So, Madam Speaker, the objective of creating the Land Bank is to give a longer term lease for agricultural leases as allowed under ALTA, which is 30 years.

It is very clear from the objective above, Madam Speaker, that the best interest of the *iTaukei* land is not paramount. It is the optimal return to the State that is far more important to the Government.

Once the lease is issued by the Land Bank, Madam Speaker, the only consideration for the landowners is the annual return.

The assessment of the rent is a prerogative of the Land Bank and the landowners cannot dispute or challenge the matter in any Court of law as stated in Section 4(4) of the Land Decree and I quote:

“All land designated under the Act shall be free of all encumbrances, and shall not be the subject of any dispute in any court, tribunal, commission or before any other person or body exercising a judicial function.”

Madam Speaker, the Land Use Decree breaches the indigenous rights of prior and informed consent. These rights directs the Government of the day to first consult and obtain the prior consent of the indigenous landowners before a change in any law or policy which is affecting their land. Did we give our consent to this? No, Madam Speaker.

That requirement was there in Section 185 of the 1997 Constitution. This is a form of alienation of indigenous rights, Madam Speaker. The indigenous rights direct indigenous people to own and manage their own lands. Madam Speaker, it is noted that the Land Bank Division is also using freehold land that were acquired by the SVT Government on the Buy Back Scheme to be bought back by the original indigenous owners that have very little land for their sustenance.

Some of this land had been fully paid by the owners and some are still under Sale and Purchase Agreements with the Government. Those that have been fully paid, Madam Speaker, should be transferred to the landowners and those that are still under the Sale and Purchase Agreement, these are legal binding contracts and should be respected by the Government.

The Land Bank is leasing some of these lands to some individuals under the Land Use Act. These issues have been highlighted in the Public Accounts Report No. 40 of 2018. This is a serious issue, Madam Speaker, and I had already raised it in this House and it should be investigated. Madam Speaker, if there is really a need for the land to be developed for commercial, agricultural and other commercial activities in the country, why did the Land Use Division market this land in Australia and Canada and through other expensive marketing advertisements. Madam Speaker, the Audit Report of 2014 also highlighted the ad hoc management, lack of policy guidelines, failure to conduct land capability studies, failure to advertise all designated lands, absence of land bank database, failure to record complaints, absence of proper documentation and absence of documented guidelines or monitoring of leases. Madam Speaker, these clearly indicate to us that the establishment of the Land Use Decree was poorly planned and executed.

The lessees of designated land under this Decree should carry out due diligence before accepting a lease from the Land Use Division considering the above issues read by the Auditor-General. At this juncture, Madam Speaker, I must pay my tribute to two people namely, the first Governor of Fiji, Sir Arthur Gordon and Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna and those who had worked with the Native Land Trust Board and the Native Land Commission, who have done more than anyone else to protect the land rights of the native Fijians and promote their interest and aspirations in respect of this.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I call by way of this statement for a review of the Land Use Decree to be consistent with the original intent of the *iTaukei* Land Trust Act. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the responsible Minister to give the right of reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, what a lot of nonsense. Madam Speaker, Honourable Dulakiverata firstly calls it Decree, it is an Act. And secondly, Madam Speaker, he has misrepresented facts here. He is implying that any *iTaukei* land can simply be used by the State to be put in the Land Bank. Absolutely, incorrect. The

regulations pertaining to the Land Use Act quite clearly Section 4 states: "... you must get a minimum of 60 percent of the members of the landowning unit."

They have to consent to it in order to present that at all and, Madam Speaker, unlike the other iTLTB, there is actually a prescribed form, it is not like they get any signature. The prescribed form, it has to be submitted. Section 11, Madam Speaker, says: "... that it must be always be in the best interest of the landowners."

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, it is absolutely nonsense to say that the State is simply filling its pockets by using of *iTaukei* land; absolutely nonsense. We have said that not a single cent of the money that is paid by lease or by way of any purchase of the land as lease goes to the State at all. A 100 percent of it goes entirely to the members of the landowning unit and, Madam Speaker, the Constitution stipulates that all land lease must be based on the market rates. He goes on about the iTLTB for decades, they have not been given the market rates, 6 percent UCV and he says that Section 10 says: "...it should only be leased for 99 years."

What nonsense, what nonsense, Madam Speaker. Section 10 states, Madam Speaker, if I can read it out to him, it says he should know this because he was with the Lands Department, it says: "all leases issued under this Act shall be for a period of not more than 99 years."

What does that mean? It can be leased for 50 years, it can be leased for 30 years, it can be leased for 5 years. That, Madam Speaker, is what has happened and in fact, Madam Speaker, in Bua the leases that had been issued for the mining have not been for 99 years, they have been for 20 years under the Land Bank. So you are here, Madam Speaker, misrepresenting to Parliament and to everyone in Fiji about what he just said. The mining license that had been issued, the lease is for 20 years under the Land Bank and for 20 years and he is saying, it is for 99 years. What utter nonsense. Madam Speaker, TLTB has been issuing leases for 99 years. You go to most of the resorts that are built on *iTaukei* land, they are for 99 years. So he is making it out as if the iTLTB has never issued leases for 99 years.

The iTLTB has issued 99-year of leases for residential purposes up in Tacirua and various other places. Commercial leases have been here for 99 years. The only reason they never gave leases for 99 years, why, because of political issue and it was for agriculture leases because of ALTA and NLTA. Madam Speaker, they only gave for 30 years. This is why till today the Honourable Seruiratu has always been saying this, "you never have seen large scale investment in agriculture because you cannot use the land as collateral." Which farmer would want to invest hundreds or you have \$2 million or \$3 million, if their lease is going to expire in 20 years' time or 30 years' time. But you see that the hoteliers because they have a 99-year lease, their security of tenure, they are able to go and spend hundreds and millions of dollars. As I have said in this Parliament, Madam Speaker, before that and I have got a list of all the lands that has been issued under the Land Bank.

One of the members of the provincial candidate of NFP that goes on about this, their family business, they came to us and said that iTLTB is not giving them a new lease because of previous developers, you know running away, et cetera and our landowning unit wants this hotel to go ahead; Kokomo in Yaukuve in Kadavu. Then they came, the landowners signed, all 60 percent or more than that, then they came I was there specifically with the Honourable Prime Minister and you need the consent of the Prime Minister even though the Ministry of Lands may actually approve it, and they said, "please." So we said, "look, your option is you can go to the Land Bank" and the members of the landowning unit agreed and they did. Today, you have a \$200 million investment - Kokomo Island Resort, Yaukuve Island in Kadavu.

So, Madam Speaker, the reality is, it gives them the options; it is up to the landowning unit entirely. Just because you have the Land Use Act here, it does not mean suddenly all the land has been taken away; it is up to them. They want to consent, they want to go to iTLTB good luck to them, they want to go through Land Bank good luck to them; 60 percent must agree to it. They will get a 100 percent of the premium that is paid and the leases. They will ensure that they get the market rates payable on their lease.

The Honourable Dulakiverata is actually being intellectually dishonest, he has not cited all the sections of the Act, he has not cited all the sections of the regulations. Madam Speaker, what else is there to say to this? This, Madam Speaker, will mean that the landowners, not just have the option but they have the ability to access leases that are, as assured under this Constitution, get paid market rates. It also says that there must be regular reviews of that and if he bothered to see the leases, he will see that the leases are there.

Madam Speaker, the list that I have been given, one that has been in Tailevu which is under Natural Water Bottling company. Two, commercial farming, one quarry business, one six-star resort and there are four leases all in the same area but all for 20 years. That is the extent of what is actually being leased out under the Land Bank. They are making it sound like some big land takeover. Please! Do not go and misrepresent it to the members of the public and I hope they are watching this, so they know that when you go out to members of the public, what sort of credibility you have, which is zero because you come to this august Parliament and completely misrepresented everything.

You stood up there and said, that leases under the Land Bank goes up to only 99 years. Nonsense! Number one mistake. Number two, Madam Speaker, on misrepresentation, that we simply take it from the landowners. No! They have to consent to it, at least a minimum of 60 percent. Madam Speaker, the leases, as I have said, can be given up to 99 years and can be less than that. And of course, Madam Speaker, today 91 percent of all the land in Fiji is *iTaukei* land and he is absolutely right.

Because of Sir. Arthur Gordon, who had this view because he got beaten up in New Zealand. He came from there where they had the Maori *Pakeha* wars. They do not talk about what had happened in Fiji when he came over here. A lot of people again glorified the Colonial administration, today we use the word *kaicolo* as a means of denigrating people, uncivilised people. How did it come about? Do you know your history? It was the people in *colo* who resisted European colonisation, so what did they do? They established a native constabulary and brought in people from Vanua Levu and from the eastern part of Fiji to go and fight *iTaukei*; while fighting *iTaukei* 70 of them were killed.

And as a result of that it was put into our culture that anyone who did something like that, resisted Colonial control, well we denigrate them, we call them *kaicolo*. Not many people know this, but this is the kind of history they need to know, Madam Speaker and unfortunately, is a result of misrepresentation and that way of thinking that we are in this position today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the next item on the order paper. Secretary-General. I now call upon the Honourable Niko Nawaikula to deliver his statement.

#### Formalisation of Informal Settlements in Urban Areas

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish now to shine a spotlight of justice on the housing crisis that is spreading insecurity amongst informal settlements all over

Fiji. It is my hope that today I will give a voice to the cries of thousands of squatters living around the country, who deserve compassion and a chance of a living life with human decency. At this stage let me say that, that side of the House has done nothing for the squatters.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Let me rephrase this, has only used them to buy votes and has done nothing and there are examples. You go to Lakena, they promised they will give to them a subdivision, still has done nothing.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- In Qauia, Lami, they are still negotiating. In Waidamudamu, they gave to them a title that meant nothing, they want decency. In Lagilagi, Madam Speaker, it abused them. It even exploited the squatters. Its solution was to delegate its task to an NGO, Peoples Community Network (PCN) who is exploiting them. Instead of fulfilling its agreement to give to them blocks of land, it built up two or three high-rise buildings, not for them but 70 percent of the people who are staying there came from outside and they are not poor. If you drive down there, you will see Pajeros and hybrids and you will see those who were previously there before occupying that block, the drainage is still there and this little devil (PCN) has been chasing people out, even the squatters, even without court orders. Let me just read this, this is one of the notice from PCN, which is the Government's solution to the squatters in Lagilagi.

“Please be informed that PCN will be demolishing your home on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 2014. We have given you enough time but since you have not taken any notice, we will come in and pull down your houses so that we can start with the development;” and we did it. Now that side of the House said, there is a constitution there that protects our rights,

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Then what is happening here?

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- What is happening here? They are abusing the process, they are not going to the court.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- They did not get a court order. But let me continue, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I have been a firm advocate for land issues because it provides us with a sense of security and big part of that is having a home.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- They say that home is where the heart is. Unfortunately, if that were true, then the story about what I am going to share with you now, you will be heart broken. You are heart broken, if you are not heart broken, you would be. You go to Lagilagi, you go talk to squatters there, some of them are here.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Squatters from Jittu. Let me now start with a story of one from Jittu, her name is Wati. A slim-built Fijian of Indian descent that originally came from Ba. Her urban migration story was typical for a lot of people in the West who came from a poor background, tight finances, mad that she could not undertake tertiary education. So she packed her few belongings and moved to the bright lights of Suva in search for a better future.

Initially, she moved in with an ageing aunty but after her aunty passed away, she took over the tin shack at Jittu Estate. It was at this time that the residents of Jittu began organising themselves in an attempt to purchase land which they wanted to subdivide and share amongst themselves. They did not have the expertise and resources to subdivide the land, so they secured the assistance of the Methodist Church. The Methodist Church then entered into an agreement with Government to subdivide the land. The Government then gave the land to the People's Concerned Network (PCN), so that is your solution. That is your solution to the squatter problem at Jittu. You gave it to a third party not to look after them; you dishonoured the agreement. You were supposed to subdivide it, and the scheme plans were approved.

The scheme plan, the survey were done by Rajan. All that you need to do was to give them their title but no, you went there and you delegated your task to an NGO with this two or three-storey buildings and get people from outside. You chase these people around and evict them without court orders.

Madam Speaker, here, I have in my hand all the documents that proves this agreement and that is the notice and I wish to table these documents, Madam Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You said your constitution guarantees our right, what right is that?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So it is a rubbish constitution. Madam Speaker, PCN started with so much hope, it was to be an NGO that would help alleviate the suffering of the poor. But instead of becoming a bright beacon of hope, it soon turned into the root of all evil, I am calling it a "little devil" because of these and only devils do that.

(Laughter)

Initially, Madam Speaker, Wati was promised by PCN that she could pay money towards the ownership of her very own plot of land in the new phase to Jittu Estate Subdivision. Excited and inspired, Wati together with 450 other families of Jittu worked hard to make regular deposits with PCN. They have been paying money, keep in mind Madam Speaker that most of the residents in Jittu Estate like Wati only had high school level of education, live below the poverty line and in horrible conditions with no access to clean water, electricity or flush toilets.

Wati, who was self-employed as a market vendor, diligently paid half of her weekly earnings of \$100 to PCN with the dream that she would one day, own a piece of land to accommodate her growing family.

Madam Speaker, that dream turned into a nightmare....

(Inaudible interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, because of you, because of your solution; delegating your task to a third party and that third party is your baby. That party is going around evicting the squatters without this - here.

(Laughter)

Who, in this world will say this – PCN; “please, be informed this year, we will be demolishing your home on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 2014 ...”

(Hon. Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You are funny, you are very funny ....

Madam Speaker, that dream turned into a nightmare, not only was she not given a house in Phase II Sub-Division, her own tin-shack home was violently turned down by some thugs with crow bars and sledge hammers, and who had sent them? PCN.

Who gave that responsibility to PCN? You.

(Hon. Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Then the trustees, she and all her belongings were thrown out into the streets, poor, you know, it is a sad story.

HON. MEMBER.- Very sad.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You should cry, you should be heartbroken.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Just a few weeks ago some residents of Jittu Estates had their homes ransacked.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- You are the mastermind.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And all their personal belongings confiscated. Madam Speaker, what democratic country is this that does this to its own disadvantaged Fijians, without a court order? The trustees of Jittu Estate even went to seek help from the Honourable Prime Minister, after listening to their story, she did not understand the legalities and then sent them to the Office of the Solicitor-General.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- (Inaudible interjection)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Solicitor-General referred them back to the Prime Minister’s Office, so from here to there; there to here, nothing, nothing.

Let me end this, Madam Speaker, by saying that the shocking truth is that PCN continues to collect hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings with no statement being given back. They are effectively stealing from the poor and that is your solution.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Ask yourself?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I say again, this government does not care about the poor people.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- They would rather spend hundreds of millions of dollars on Chinese-built roads then on putting a roof over the heads of our poorest citizens. Yes, we have free education, an initiative, I might add, that was started under the previous Government, not yours, free education was not yours but what use is free education to the thousands of children living in informal settlements when they are more worried about their houses being torn down at any moment, any moment this can happen? You go there and they will do this to you too.

(Laughter)

The tens of thousands of our poor deserve more than a “Band-Aid” solution. We need a concrete plan of action that would give the poorest citizens of our country their sense of security.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Hear, hear!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Speaker, I would like to end by stating once again that this Government has failed the poor of this country, and if it cannot provide a sense of security, it should step aside and let us finish what we started many years ago.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the responsible Minister to give the right of reply.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise to correct the incorrect statements made by the Honourable Member.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- By now, it is a known fact that he has a habit of misleading this Honourable House. Madam Speaker, he has just said ....

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- A point of order. I ask the Honourable Minister to withdraw that.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- For what?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is un-parliamentary, he says that I have a habit of misleading this House. Can you withdraw that, please?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I have heard many times the word “unparliamentarily” being used in Parliament and therefore you may continue.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, and before I go into my proper response, one must realise or understand why this issue has now come to Parliament from the particular Honourable Member. I am telling you the reason, because I have been going to all these informal settlements and I have been told by the squatters that he has been influencing

landowners not to lease, but to give the development lease to government for the development of these squatter settlements.

HON. MEMBER.- Tell us, tell us.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Just look at his man, this is the fact, Madam Speaker, and now, he wants to come and tell the public, the whole of Fiji that he is so concerned about the squatters. Who created the squatters in Fiji?

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- You.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- It is him. I want to be on record saying that he is the culprit of creating squatters in this country.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, the reason being, the former iTLTB ....

HON. SPEAKER.- A point of order.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I can accept argument on issues but when it becomes personal, I cannot take it.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can you, please ask the Honourable Minister to withdraw that, I am not the culprit.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- You are.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is too personal.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- But that sounds better.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Let him talk on the issue. Please, please.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Please, talk on the issues, we can argue until daylight comes.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- But we talk on the issues.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Do not become personal.

HON. SPEAKER.- You have gone into a personal statement ...

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Yes.

HON. SPEAKER.- ... and I would like you to withdraw that statement.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will withdraw the word “culprit” but I will still say that he was very much part of the iTLTB team at that point in time when the leases were not renewed, that is a fact. No one can deny that fact, he is smiling, because he knows it is the truth.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Talk about PCN.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, the plan of action to formalise the informal settlements in Fiji’s urban areas is under the National Housing Policy through the Cabinet Decision in March 2011.

Madam Speaker, the National Housing Policy provides a clear direction for Government to shift away from what was the piece-meal approach to affordable and decent shelter for all Fijians.

HON. GOVT. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- I will go to the other squatter areas later on but let me go now direct to the Lagilagi Housing Project. He pointed out that, “It’s your Government”, I do not know why he is not saying the truth. Do you know who the trustee is? Your former candidate, Mr. Samuela Saumatua, your colleague, why are you not saying this, this is the truth, why?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, the Lagilagi Housing Project is a Government-funded housing development, in partnership with a Non-Government Organisation - PCN.

HON. OPP. MEMBER.- Tell us.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Do you know what the meaning of PCN is? Peoples Community Network for Squatters. The main objective of this housing development is to provide security of tenure, decent and affordable homes for squatters.

Father Kevin Barr is very much involved in this project. Madam Speaker, I hope the Honourable Member will listen rather than having discussion otherwise he will start asking some nonsense.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, he has made a statement saying that people have been staying there for so long, he is quite right. What were the previous governments doing - the SVT Government (Rabuka’s Government), SDL? I am asking them now because it is my right to ask them. What were these Governments doing? It was only the FijiFirst Government, Madam Speaker who cares and thought about these informal settlements in this country and they went into partnership with the Non-Government Organisation.

Madam Speaker, Lagilagi Housing Project Phase I consists of 77 housing units and was completed in November, 2015 at a total cost of \$5.7 million; 77 eligible squatter families are currently occupying the housing units.

Madam Speaker, the Lagilagi Housing Project Phase II which has got another 77 Housing Units, is currently under construction, at a total cost of around \$6 million by Fortech Construction Limited. Out of the 77 housing units, Madam Speaker, 40 housing units were completed in March 2018 and the remaining 37 units are now almost 75-percent completed.

Madam Speaker, let this Government assure to all those who are making their instalment payments to PCN that they will be given a unit.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- (Inaudible)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Can you listen? Paying on instalment will be given a unit. That is the promise, that is the assurance that we are giving. We are so strong in giving that assurance because we know that we are going to deliver that, unlike your Government, the SVT and the other Governments, who were promising but not delivering, that is the fact.

(Acclamation)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- You cannot ran away from the fact because these are the truths which will hurt you.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- But surprisingly, why have you brought this to Parliament now? You have been in this Parliament three and a half years, I want to repeat, because you went to some squatter settlements and in some places you had been chased.

(Laughter)

I really did not want to go to this but you are making me say all these things, Honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, I just want to briefly say on the Government's Informal Settlement Upgrading Programme that supports the National Housing Policy.

Madam Speaker, the Town Wide Informal Settlement Upgrading Project is a programme that is on the *iTaukei* Land whereby service namely roads are sealed to the Fiji Roads Authority standard, Electricity Reticulation to Fiji Electricity Authority standard, Water and Sewerage to Water Authority of Fiji standard, Fire Hydrants, Drainage and other works.

Madam Speaker, one must realise, who will benefit from all these subdivisions? This is what they are not saying, who is going to benefit from all these subdivisions? I want to make it very clear today. It is the landowners who will benefit from these subdivisions because at the moment, it is not formalised, Government has stepped in, and Government is putting its funds to develop that area to a fully serviced subdivision. So, who is the winner? The winner is the landowners. What are you harping for? This is the only Government that has come in to and has seen what needs to be done in all these informal settlements that were created when you were part of iTLTB.

So Government has come in and at the moment, Madam Speaker, I am happy to state that in consultation with the landowners and the *iTaukei* Board, Government has acquired 30 development leases for the squatter upgrading settlements.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Madam Speaker, the landowners have been paid the required premium that is supposed to be paid and that has been done.

Madam Speaker, very briefly, I just want to go on to these 30 development leases that I have been talking about that we have acquired 30 development leases on the *vakavanua* settlements on *iTaukei* land from *iTaukei* Land Trust Board that will be fully upgraded through the Town Wide Informal Settlement Upgrading Programme.

Out of these 30 settlements, Madam Speaker, two are at a civil construction stage (that is Ledrusasa and Waidamudamu).

Madam Speaker, if I do not have to correct him, who is going to correct him because I am the line Minister. He has mentioned in his statement that without the subdivision, leases have been given in Waidamudamu, it is a lie.

I am telling you, Madam Speaker, they have not been issued with title. At the moment the upgrading works is going on, construction works are ongoing so if I am not going to say that he is lying, what else should I say, that he is telling the truth? You are not telling the truth, Honourable Member, please, for God's sake, at least, tell the truth, Waidamudamu settlement is under construction, no lease has been issued. The lease will only be issued after the completion of the subdivision, you should understand this.

(Government Member interjects)

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- No, no, it is more or less a shame, you know.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, out of the 30 settlements, two are at the civil construction stage, those are, as I have mentioned, Ledrusasa in Nadi and Waidamudamu here, 11 are at the consultancy design stage where engineering consultants are in the process of designing the subdivision scheme plan. Madam Speaker, nine projects are at a tender stage where you want to give it to the consultants to carry out the scheme plans.

So, Madam Speaker, all in all, I just want to say that it is the FijiFirst Government that is the only Government who saw the need, this is not vote buying, let us be clear about that. We are worried about human beings, we are worried about the Fijians in this country, to have decent living standards and that is where Government has funded for all these subdivisions, and I am happy to say that the landowners have been very cooperative in working with the Government and iTLTB.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, and we will move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

**ADJOURNMENT**

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move his motion.

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

That Parliament adjourns until Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2018 at 7.30 p.m.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- At this juncture, I sincerely thank all Honourable Members for your participation and contribution to the Parliamentary proceedings in the course of this sitting period. I also reiterate my gratitude to the Committee Chairpersons and Members for your hard work and efforts in presenting and ensuring the large number of review reports that were tabled and debated during the week.

I now declare that Parliament is adjourned until Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2018 at 7.30 p.m., for the Budget Address.

Thank you very much, Honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.11 p.m.