

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

TUESDAY, 10TH JULY, 2018

[CORRECTED COPY]

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TUESDAY, 10TH JULY, 2018

The Parliament resumed at 9.32 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 and the Honourable Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 9th July, 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

I welcome all Honourable Members to today's Parliament Sitting.

I also welcome members of the public joining us in the gallery and those watching proceedings on television and the internet and listening on the radio, and I see a delegation from Nadi led by the Tui Nadi.

Tui Nadi and your delegation: you are very welcome to Parliament this morning. Thank you for your interest in your Parliament.

Disruptive Interjections

Honourable Members, for those who are listed on today's Order Paper to speak, if during your speech interjections are too disruptive, you can stop and resume when all is quiet, extra time will be given, otherwise I cannot hear what is being said.

Hon. Lt. Col. N. Rika - Birthday Wishes

Honourable Members, at this juncture, please, join me in wishing the Honourable Netani Rika a very Happy Birthday and Many Happy Returns of the Day!

(Applause)

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence - Review of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing (Agreement)

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

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present this Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, on the review of the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

Madam Speaker, this Report provides a summary and examination of written and oral submissions received by the Committee during its inquiry from 28th May, 2018 to 21st June, 2018.

The Agreement is a Multilateral and legally binding Treaty that was negotiated under the auspices of the technical consultation, convened by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO). This international instrument comprehended the FAO Model Scheme on Port State Measures to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing with 53 Parties to the Agreement as of this year.

Madam Speaker, the objective of the Agreement is to prevent, deter, eliminate IUU fishing through the implementation of effective Port State Measures. IUU fishing undermines the effort to sustainably manage fish stock and has a range of negative environmental impacts, economic, social consequences, including the Fijian fishing industry.

Madam Speaker, Port State Measures apply to vessels that request entry to port until the time they leave the port, for example, vessel inspection. The Agreement establishes a set of minimum standards on the management of access by foreign-flagged fishing vessel, not including foreign-flagged charter vessels and related support vessels to port.

Madam Speaker, the Agreement fills a gap in the international fishery governance framework by setting internationally abridged standard for Port State Measures. If widely implemented, it will reduce the availability of 'ports of convenience' (that is port with weak controls in place) making it increasingly difficult and less economic to undertake IUU fishing. A reduction of IUU fishing would reduce environmental impacts and increase economic and social benefit, including economic benefits for Fijian fishers operating in high value international fisheries that are targeted by IUU fishers.

It is proposed that Fiji accede and ratify the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing which has entered into force on 5th June, 2016.

Madam Speaker, Fiji is surrounded by waters with an area of 1.23 million square kilometres compared to each land area of 18,274 square kilometres. This is a ratio of 70:1 and total coastline of 1,129 kilometres which indicates that Fiji's national interest and economic power is related to maritime. Two-thirds of our national revenue are derived from our blue economy. Having mentioned this briefly, our national security threats and challenges are maritime-related in relation to supporting enforcement of Fisheries Treaties that is linked to Sustainable Development Goal 14, which is "Life Below Water".

Policing of Fiji's Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ), offshore fishing and inshore fishing and from the national maritime security, fisheries protection and environmentally sustainable perspective is everyone's responsibility.

IUU Fishing is very difficult to assess because it is not reported. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) estimates that global losses of IUU fishing cost up to US\$36.4 billion each year. IUU fishing is one of the greatest evil of our oceans today, depleting marine life regardless of species and size. IUU Fishing have no respect for nature and the life cycle of sea creatures. Those engaged in IUU fishing are blinded by their own greed for money to go to the extent of destroying juvenile sea species and non-targeted species.

Madam Speaker, Article 30 stipulates that no reservations or exceptions may be made to this Agreement. The signing of the Agreement will be consistent with the Fiji Government's Business Growth Agenda, in particular its objective to build economic growth by sustainably using natural resources. It is also consistent with Fiji's pursuit of international best practices and with Fiji's policy objectives of strengthening international fisheries governance and reducing the occurrence of IUU fishing. The Agreement will also reinforce Fiji's reputation as a responsible fishing State and set a positive precedent for the wider Pacific.

Madam Speaker, the Committee would like to acknowledge and commend the fourteen (14) submissions received from Government ministries and departments, regional and international organisations, private sector, political parties and non-governmental organisations.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee, I commend this Report to Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

Pursuant to Standing Order 121(1)(b) and Standing Order 130(4), the Standing Committee has now reported back.

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence -
Review of the World Health Organisation Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products

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

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, once again, I am pleased to present this Report of the Fiji Parliament Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence on the review of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

Madam Speaker, the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is the parent Treaty; the Protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products was developed in response to the growing illegal trade in tobacco products, often across borders.

According to the WHO, illicit trade poses a serious threat to public health because it increases access to often cheaper tobacco products, thus fuelling the tobacco epidemic and undermining tobacco control policies. However, the Ministry of Health notes for Fiji, from 25 to 64 years age group, there has been a significant decrease of tobacco use in 42.4 percent from 2002 to 13.8 percent in 2011.

Madam Speaker, Fiji signed and ratified the WHO FCTC on 3rd October, 2003. Many of the provisions of the WHO FCTC have been implemented through domestic legislation namely, the Fiji Tobacco Control Act 2010 and its regulations.

Madam Speaker, the WHO noted that illicit trade causes substantial losses in Government revenues for undeclared tobacco, and at the same time contributes to the funding of international criminal activities. Parties to the WHO FCTC decided on the Protocol to address the illicit tobacco trade and after several years of negotiations, it was adopted in November 2012. Currently 36 parties have ratified or acceded to the Protocol. A total of 40 countries must ratify or accede to the Protocol by 2nd July 2018 (we have gone past that) in order to convene the first meeting of the parties immediately after the 8th Conference of Parties of the WHO FCTC.

Madam Speaker, the Protocol aims to secure the supply chain of tobacco products, measures widely considered to be the heart of the Protocol. However, it requires the establishment of global tracking and tracing systems, and a global information sharing point that is located at the Convention Secretariat. A global track and trace system which can identify tobacco product through the distribution chain and should it enter illicit market, trace it back to determine at what point it entered the illicit channel.

Madam Speaker, the Protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products is a milestone in strengthening global action against tobacco, and it is a new legal instrument in public health. It also supplement the WHO, FCTC with comprehensive tools to counter and eventually eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products and strengthen legal dimension for international health cooperation.

Madam Speaker, the Committee would like to acknowledge and commend the eight submissions received from the Government Ministries and Departments, regional and international organisations, private sector and non-governmental organisations.

Madam Speaker, I commend this Report to Parliament for its consideration.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.-Pursuant to Standing Order 121(1)(b) and Standing Order 130(4), the Standing Committee has now reported back.

I have been advised that there will be no Consideration of Additional Bills today.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE 2018-2019 APPROPRIATION BILL 2018

HON. SPEAKER. –Thank you. We will continue from where we left off on the Batting Order and I now call upon the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Lands and Mineral Resources to have the floor.

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

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, I thank you for allowing me to take the floor to deliver my statement in support of the 2018-2019 National Budget.

Madam Speaker, the 2018-2019 National Budget for this financial year is amongst the best National Budgets in our nation's history. It focuses on the core of what makes our country great, our Fijian families, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the 2018-2019 Budget provides innovative and practical initiatives for the betterment of all Fijians. Each subsequent National Budget of the FijiFirst Government since 2014 has

continued to focus on inclusive growth, development of businesses and improving the livelihoods of all Fijians.

We have provided, Madam Speaker, the Fijian people, what matters to them most. That is affordable and accessible education, better roads and ports, improved connectivity and the ability to make a living and contribute to the economy.

Madam Speaker, these are some of the reasons why Fiji is the best place in the region to do business. Let me once and for all set the records straight on an issue that the Opposition continues to flog like a dead horse, Madam Speaker.

I would ask the Honourable Member who has stated some issues yesterday that if the other Pacific Island countries that he quoted are so much better to do business in, why does he not go there and invest and start a bus business, Madam Speaker. I am sure this will be welcome, Madam Speaker.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Of course, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of order.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The Honourable Member is calling me “pathetic”. What kind of Parliamentary language is he using?

HON. SPEAKER.- You may point at me. What is the point of order?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The Honourable Attorney-General used the word “pathetic”, Madam Speaker and he gets away with that through unparliamentarily language. I remember, one time you asked me to withdraw the word “pathetic”. He should also be asked to withdraw the word “pathetic”, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The word “pathetic” has been heard here many, many times, it is not un-parliamentary right now, but please Honourable Members, as from now, let us refrain

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You are pathetic.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, order! Order!

Honourable Members, when the Speaker is speaking, I really need to have your attention. Thank you, no more “pathetic” from now on. Honourable Minister, you may continue.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Unpatriotic, Madam Speaker, unpatriotic! It is rather a tame word, I really do not know how to describe that. Obviously, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Member will not make a move as he is earning a significant profit that has been made possible by the forward-looking pro-business policies of the FijiFirst Government.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, it is also very cheap to attack civil servants, who are not able to defend themselves in this House. It is my responsibility to ensure that the dignity of my Officials is protected, Madam Speaker.

Civil Servants are not to be used as a political football. They are impartial and they are here to serve the Government of the day by delivering essential services to our people. The Honourable Member should be ashamed of himself.

First, for the benefit of the Opposition, who choose to have a selective memory when it suits their nefarious purposes, the other notable achievement made by the FijiFirst Government for the betterment of Fijians include, the doubling of GDP per capita to \$12,000 from \$6,400 in 2006.

For the Honourable Members of the Opposition, who do not understand or refuse to understand what GDP per capita means, it is a country's economic output in proportion to its population. Do not make faces, Honourable Member, you are the one that gets it all wrong. Madam Speaker, it is recognised as the best measurement of a county's standard of living.

Madam Speaker, secondly, increasing the minimum taxable income threshold from \$8,400 in 2006 to \$30,000 in the 2017-2018 Budget, and this is a factual thing you should listen to. This simply means that over 85,000 Fijians in the formal sector do not pay income tax any more. Therefore, Fijians today pay lesser tax on their income and have more disposable income on hand for consumption and investment. VAT has been reduced to 9 percent and targeted support is provided to Fijians who need it.

The increase in the number of Fijians involved in businesses, Madam Speaker, and the growth of the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector has made the Fijian economy more resilient. This is evident as we have been able to bounce back from the devastation of *TC Winston*, *TC Josie* and *TC Keni*, within a remarkably short space of time, Madam Speaker.

The tourism industry is year-on-year, Madam Speaker, despite the doom and gloom from the other side. It exceeded forecasted revenue and we are on track to reach our \$2.2 billion industry well before 2021. The benefits to the communities and resource owners from the development in the tourism sector is huge.

Madam Speaker, for the first time in Fijian history, young Fijians are given the confidence to realise their dreams. The young Fijians that they forget about, Madam Speaker, the youth of Fiji who have brilliant ideas but previously lack the funding are supported through the Young Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) to become job creators, a thought that was thought up by this side of the House.

Madam Speaker, 360 families living in 19 informal settlements have been issued with Approval Notices with a view to getting leases later on. This is a life-changing moment for those families as they will now have access to finance to build their homes and break the vicious cycle of poverty which that side of the House wants them to continue to be in, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Land Use Division has been very successful in generating \$6.5 million in revenue over the past seven years to various landowning units around the country which I might add, Madam Speaker, includes some aspiring NFP young candidates.

Madam Speaker, I wish to move away from the usual rhetoric that the Opposition ponders or panders to. No rational individual, Madam Speaker, can argue with statistics, except for this Opposition. I want to illustrate the immense success of the programmes of the Fijian Government through stories and testimonials direct from the Fijian people. Madam Speaker, the success not only shows plans and policies in action but also depicts their impact on the lives of ordinary Fijians.

Programmes, such as Micro and Small Business Grant (MSBG), Standardised Roadside Stalls, the IHRDP, are not election gimmicks, Madam Speaker, as the Opposition would like to think. It is a continuation and I repeat, continuation of the long-standing commitment that the FijiFirst made to our grassroot communities, Madam Speaker, right back in 2014 and not just prior to this election.

Madam Speaker, there have been utterances, there have been innuendos and there have been mendacities by the Opposition which cannot go unchallenged. Over the last day we have learnt nothing new and we have heard nothing new from the Opposition. As they have done over the past four years, the Opposition continues to run around like headless chickens, Madam Speaker, by throwing around all sorts of nonsensical gibberish and outright fabrication, living in the hope that this may stick somewhere.

Madam Speaker, they are plucking things out of the air. I think maybe they should all go and see the Honourable Minister for Employment and get a job plucking things overseas. Madam Speaker, there is plenty of jobs available.

(Laughter)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- The Opposition not only contradicted themselves in their immature responses to the Budget, but also try to confuse and bewilder all Fijians, Madam Speaker. They have confirmed to us that we are scraping the bottom of the barrel when it comes to the quality of submissions coming from that side of the House, Madam Speaker.

It is outrageous, Madam Speaker, and this is very important, that they can think that Fijians are gullible and will somehow fall prey to the race baiting and fear mongering that the Opposition is known for.

The Fijian people, Madam Speaker, are tired of the politics of the old. The average Fijian desires for a decent job that pays a decent wage, that they can look after their families as delivered by the FijiFirst Government. Fijians at our core are humble, God-fearing and loving people, Madam Speaker. Fijians are inherently good and will not let themselves be exploited as a bargaining chip for political gain by the other side.

Madam Speaker, let me do the Opposition on the other side a little favour, something that they would not do. The problem on that side of the House lies within their hierarchy, within their leadership and crude behaviour of some of their members who profess to be democratic.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition is completely bereft of any ideas or sound policy proposals, so they resort to deceitfulness. Honourable Aseri Radrodro, Madam Speaker, mentioned something about the MSBG yesterday. The MSBG, Honourable Member, does not require applicants to possess a business licence before processing MSBG grants as you have wrongly stated, Sir. Please, check with me.

One of the aims of the MSBG is to formalise the informal sector and that, Madam Speaker, is such an important point, to formalise the informal sector. Therefore, encouraging recipients to obtain a registration and once it is all done at a very small price, achieves this ambition, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, since its inception, the MSBG has assisted 21,939 micro and small entrepreneurs, and this is good statistics for the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad. It has impacted the lives of 109,695 Fijians, with an investment of \$21.4 million by the Government of Fiji and the assistance from the Government of India. That is no small feat, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, let me tell the Opposition, and everyone should listen to this. Do not frown, Honourable Member, I know you do not like it because it hurts.

The 81 percent success rate means that the 17,771 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)....

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- By his own admission, now he says that you can play around with statistics.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- He just admitted it, Madam Speaker. He is playing around with statistics. Is that not wonderful? Let the whole of Fiji hear that he wants to play around with statistics.

(Honourable Member interjects)

Here is the statistics - 17,771 MSMEs are operating successfully. Based on the assessment of the MSBG recipients, they have earned (at least) \$8.8 million in revenue and thousands of new jobs have been created.

This Opposition, Madam Speaker, is in absolute denial when they say that the MSBG is not contributing towards the betterment of the grassroot community. They continue to criticise this noble initiative because it hurts them, Madam Speaker, because they were the ones who did not come up with it and once again, giving credence to their philosophy of keeping the grassroots in the grassroot.

Madam Speaker, I wish to highlight some of the success stories from our MSBG recipients. I am very pleased that they are actually here.

Savitri Devi, Madam Speaker, of Navua was assisted to purchase fencing and shed material for goat farming. She has increased her livestock from 5 to 20 and she approximately makes about \$250 per goat, a dish that we all love, Madam Speaker. The income has been used to meet her family obligations.

Makereta Navunicagi of Nadera, runs a tailoring business and screen printing. Her income has increased three-fold, Madam Speaker, from \$50 to \$180 per month.

Dewan Chand of Navua now earns an increased income of \$200 per week.

Pio Drivanavulau of Naitonitoni, Madam Speaker, was assisted to purchase *dalo* and this is great, you need to hear this. He was assisted to purchase *dalo* and *yaqona* seedlings. Today, Pio earns \$2,000 per week, Madam Speaker, from the sale of *dalo* and he employs four people. He plans to expand his farming.

Jim Peter Holmes of Navua operates a poultry business. I am sure some of you might purchase eggs from him. Today, he earns a weekly income of about \$200 from the sale of eggs.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Of course, he is in Navua. You know him, Honourable Member.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government treats everyone fairly and equally in accordance with our national laws. It is utter nonsense . . .

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, a point of order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, on the relevance of the topic on the small business and the Honourable Minister is misleading the House and the people listening because the list of those who had applied for small business for the \$1,000 grant that I had given to him and asked the Ministry, up until today, Madam Speaker, they still have not received that \$1,000 assistance. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, you did mention relevance to start of your point of order but the content of that order was something totally different and does not qualify under the point of order.

Honourable Minister, please continue.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Here we go again, Madam Speaker, irrelevant points of order.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government treats everyone equally and fairly in accordance with our national law. It is utter nonsense and counter-productive for SODELPA to focus undue attention on a particular group of investors. I am sure this was mentioned yesterday, but the same group to which their leader is all too happy to sell his land too when it comes to lining his own pockets, Madam Speaker. This is the same kind of despicable behaviour that could send our country back 20 years.

The FijiFirst Government, Madam Speaker, also does not, by any means, discriminate against any investor, whether they are from China or Australia or New Zealand or Papua New Guinea or from the moon.

Madam Speaker, it is worth noting, and I hope you will take this back home, that Chinese investors are amongst the top five investors in Australia and New Zealand. In fact, in New Zealand, the Chinese are the largest investors in the dairy industry.

Madam Speaker, this heavy-handed and regressive approach will take Fiji back to the dark ages, and I hope everyone in Fiji is listening. Foreign investments bring into a country foreign income, and more importantly, it brings in new ideas, expertise, new technology that assist in economic development and also brings in jobs.

Madam Speaker, we do not need geriatrically-thinking politicians in power. We need a level-headed, assertive, fair and just leader like our Honourable Prime Minister, who will defend Fiji's interests, here and abroad. We need a leader, who values integrity and loves all Fijians proudly and equally, Madam

Speaker. And I am sad to say that under the unsteady stewardship of their new leader, SODELPA has denigrated its position and continues to occupy the mantle of a polarising party known more for its divisiveness, bigotry, racism and for its outright xenophobia.

Madam Speaker, both Opposition have sold out on their principles, sold out on their integrity and, by and large, through the actions of their leaders and many more of their members, have sold out on their moral authority with a core objective of spreading lies, hatred and ethnic division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in their previous campaign, they said, “Reclaim Fiji”, but let me tell you something, the only reclamation that is going on is from this side of the House and this Government, Madam Speaker.

God forbid, Madam Speaker, if they have a God to seek on that side of this House. God help Fiji and all Fijians.

Madam Speaker, moving on to another successful programme, we have got the roadside stalls initiative that provides vendors with structured and secured stall place that replaces their makeshift stalls. This has not only improved the standards but also ensure that the stalls are resilient in national disasters.

A total of 30 odd stalls, Madam Speaker, have been installed this year and this will be continued with a budget support of \$2 million.

The National Export Strategy (NES) over the past 12 years, (statistics again, Honourable Member) has supported 104 projects valued at over FJ\$14 million. From 2007 to 2014, exports of those companies increased by \$30 million, Madam Speaker, whilst export production increased by 5,232 tonnes and 329 new jobs have been created.

The Fijian Government’s policies and initiatives are not developed in isolation, it is an integrated approach, supporting the entire supply chain, Madam Speaker. Ben’s Trading, an NES-supported company, is supplied *dalo* by an MSBG recipient (as I had mentioned earlier), Mr. Drivanavulau, which is an excellent example of Government’s policies having a sustainable impact for the betterment of our community.

Moving on, Madam Speaker, to the impact of our tourism development on resources owners and communities; tourism is Fiji’s largest employer as it employs one in three persons in the workforce. The Honourable Gavoka continues to point out what Government spends to attract one visitor. However, he fails (I cannot understand the logic in this) to point out the return on investment, Madam Speaker, by spending \$32.80 per visitor...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, I see the *Tui Nadi* smiling. We earn approximately \$2,135 per visitor.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, the International Golf Tournament obviously has accomplished all the objectives that it sets out to achieve. It has positioned Fiji into an international destination for sporting events, Madam Speaker. Fiji is now one of the most sought-after destination for sporting events, such as rugby league, surfing, ultra-marathon, et cetera.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, just a couple of things. Honourable Gavoka also pointed out to the lack of water resources in the Natadola area. What was he doing when they were in Government, Madam Speaker?

I would like to inform the House that the Mineral Resources Department (MRD), Madam Speaker, has successfully drilled 14 boreholes and reticulated 19 while six have been commissioned this year alone. Madam Speaker, this complements the work of Water Authority of Fiji (WAF).

Madam Speaker, also the Wairabetia Economic Zone (WEZ) is another key project being implemented by the Ministry stemming from the Fijian Government's vision with respect to the 5-year and 20-year National Development Plan which will feature world-class infrastructure for investment in retail; I have said this over and over again.

Madam Speaker, on the issue of development of *iTaukei* land, I am pleased to advise that the Land Use Unit has issued 50 leases and one licence that has generated a total income of \$9.1 million for the landowner and for the benefit of everyone here, Madam Speaker. No one is forced to give their land to the Land Bank, it is a choice that they have.

Madam Speaker, despite the previous negative comments on the development of *iTaukei* land and falsely claiming that we are engaging in land grabbing, all are absolute false and lies. They have a choice. If they wish to, they can deposit and they derive a great benefit out of it, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, at the last Parliament Sitting also, the Fair Share of Mineral Royalties Act 2018 was passed. This was a proud achievement of the FijiFirst Government, as it allows resource owners to have a fair share of royalty. This has been calculated at 80 percent to resource and 20 percent to the State. This, Madam Speaker, has never been done and is a pioneering achievement and I understand yesterday, the Honourable Aseri Radrodoro said that we should also classify water as a mineral.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Please, do not try and fool anyone, please do not try and fool anyone at the end of the day. The next thing they will do, Madam Speaker, they will pluck something else out of thin air and say, "why don't we classify air and charge everyone also, Madam Speaker."

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, where do they get such absolute ludicrous and utter nonsense?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Please, read the definition. This is the same very definition of minerals that has been standing through the test of time. Read the definitions. You never gave 80:20.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- I will give you extra time.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Speaker, they never gave 80:20. They did not give anything to the resource owners. We did, Madam Speaker, this side of the House has.

Madam Speaker, I wish to clarify also to this august House that all of these things that they say could be nothing but further from the truth. Please do not be deceitful, be honest with the Fijian people like we are, Madam Speaker.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Hear, hear!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Be honest and truthful, be honest and fear God, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- *Talatala*, I am sure you will remember that - fear God, Madam Speaker, just like all God fearing Fijian citizens, you also should be God fearing citizens.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry has and will continue with the development of *iTaukei* land for the benefit of the *iTaukei* people. With an allocated budget of \$2 million, the FijiFirst Government also through the development of *iTaukei* land will be able to rake in lucrative profits and proceeds that will benefit the landowning units without any cost, Madam Speaker, which is a unique feature of this particular programme, contrary to what has been undertaken by previous governments.

Madam Speaker, lastly, please remember; every Honourable Member of this House - we are one nation bound together by love, friendship and goodwill. That is what Fiji is all about. Let us work together and build bridges.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- God is love.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- God is love. I do not disagree, *Talatala*, praise the Lord and I praise you too, *Talatala*.

(Laughter)

Kalougata, Sir.

Madam Speaker, let us now build bridges and let us not make walls. Let us do the best we can for our Fijian families, like this side of the House continues to do on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to address this august House and I wholeheartedly and fully support the 2018-2019 National Budget.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Mataiasi Niumataiwalu to have the floor.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament; I rise to support the FijiFirst Government's 2018-2019 National Budget.

I take this opportunity to thank the leadership of the FijiFirst Government by the Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, for bringing home this National Budget, focusing on the family. It all begins in the home and I thank the Lord for giving the wisdom and the foresight to the leadership of the FijiFirst Government to draw us back to the foundation which is the family.

In the sight of God all Fijian families matter and the billboards around the country are prophetic. Madam Speaker, Proverbs 2: 6-10 says, and I quote:

“⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom: from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.⁷ He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,⁸ He guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones;⁹ Then you will understand what is right and just and fair and every good path. ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul”.

Like, I previously said, Fiji needs strong, decisive leadership with vision and purpose to propel the nation forward, living no-one behind.

The 2018-2019 Budget as announced by the Honourable Minister for Economy is pegged on empowering Fijians to unlock potentials in terms of economic empowerment. It takes advantage of sustained GDP growth, low inflation, high foreign reserves and nine years of economic stability.

I will primarily focus on the budget allocation to the Ministry of Communications and also speak on why all Fijians families matter. This Ministry is responsible for keeping the Fijian people connected to each other and to the outside world by providing efficient, competitive, cost-effective and accessible telecommunication and postal services. It is also responsible for supporting the development of Fiji’s information, communication and technology sector by providing technical and strategic support to the industry.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry engages with the Fijian public over radio, print and online media to keep the Fijian people updated on Government’s plans and policies and to quickly alert the public to important information relating to public safety and security. And as we speak, Parliament sessions are televised live all over the country and it is prudent that all members use the communications structure that is in place.

Government funds the *Walesi* Digital Television Platform, which provides a package of high quality, free-to-air televisions stations, reachable by satellite absolutely anywhere in Fiji, and as we head to Elections, I believe that the Opposition would love to promote their programmes on this free-to-air satellite structure that is in place. That is why it is important that *Walesi* is very instrumental and is placed in such a way that it will be an advantage to everyone in Parliament.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Especially in Nayau and my colleague, the Honourable Karavaki had alluded to yesterday about the jetty in Wainiyabia but he left out something very important in that. The reason why it was taking long because they were not in agreement for the place where the jetty was supposed to be built; the site. That was some of the information that he left out. He was blaming it on the Government releasing the funds but the discussions back in Lakeba, they were trying to decide where to have the jetty.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, through *Walesi* the Ministry aims to cultivate a more knowledge-based and civically-engaged society and give Fijians the chance to enjoy high quality television with their families and communities.

The Ministry of Communications also manages all ICT systems in the Fijian Government. The Ministry is currently undertaking a significant investment programme to improve the reliability and

efficiency of the Government network to ensure that Government data is more secure against cyber threats.

The Ministry comprises of the Department of Information, Department of Communications and the Information Technology and Computing Services.

The total Budget for the Ministry of Communications in the 2018-2019 Budget is \$65 million, comprising \$23.8 million for Operating Expenditure, \$38 million for Capital Expenditure and VAT of \$3.2 million. The increase of \$3 million is mainly attributed to a new allocation covering Government's grant to *Walesi* which allows Fijian families from absolutely anywhere in our country to access a package of free-to-air television stations via satellite or mobile device.

Walesi is already transmitting from 17 terrestrial sites across the country. These include:

1. Nakobalevu - covering greater Suva area and areas from Tailevu to Pacific Harbour;
2. Dogowale - Pacific Harbour to Namosi;
3. Gusunitaga - Sigatoka;
4. Kavukavu - Outer Sigatoka, parts of Nadi;
5. Sabeto - Greater Nadi to Lautkoka area;
6. Lololo - Greater Ba area;
7. Tuidreke - Tavua, parts of Ba;
8. Koro-o - Tavua, parts of Ra and Nadarivatu;
9. Monasavu - Central Viti Levu;
10. Rakiraki - Greater Rakiraki area;
11. Mataiwailevu - Between Rakiraki and Tailevu;
12. Savusavu - Savusavu Town area;
13. Uluivuya - Nabouwalu and surrounding areas;
14. Delaikoro - Labasa, Seaqaqa, Nadogo areas;
15. Devoux Peak - Island of Taveuni;
16. Kadavu - Vunisea area; and
17. Levuka - Levuka Town area.

Madam Speaker, the reason why I listed out those sites is that, previously we had only a few sites. We only had Nakobalevu which had a south ridge and we had Uluivuya. So, seeing that we have 17 terrestrial sites, wherever you go in the country, even if you have your radio on, you will still hear whatever is coming through the radio. Previously, when you go into areas or pockets where we could not get the frequency working, you had to tune to cassette radio or something. So, that is why it is so important wherever you go around the country, when you have these terrestrial sites, you can even hear your radio throughout the country.

The allocation in this year's Budget will allow us to build on these primary areas and strengthen coverage previously only covered by satellite. This will mean that we will be installing higher powered antennas and more powerful transmitters to extend the current terrestrial coverage.

Any area not serviced by terrestrial means can be serviced through satellites. We are already covering islands in the Yasawas, Moala, Cikobia, Yacata, Rotuma, et cetera, through satellite.

The cost of setting out new telecentres and expanding internet access to schools across Fiji, creating the infrastructure for more knowledge-based and modern society and currently 29 schools are equipped with Telecentres. Just to mention a few of those secondary schools, they are:

- Ba Methodist High School;

- Baulevu High School;
- Nukuloa College;
- Lomawai Secondary School;
- Lomaivuna High School;
- Suva Sangam School;
- Levuka Public School;
- Tailevu North College; and
- Rakiraki Public School.

So, we are extending the reach, not only for the grown-ups but to the schools as well.

Six new Telecentre sites have been earmarked for installation in the 2018-2019 financial year. Fiji's ongoing digital Government transformation, DigitalFiji born from collaboration between the Fijian Government and Singapore Cooperation Enterprise, an agency of Singapore Government, DigitalFiji is the flagship programme in this overarching transformation of the delivery of Government services.

Madam Speaker, last week I was in Singapore and I was just looking at how the digital platform has really improved the communications programmes back in Singapore, which is something that Fiji can work towards and with this collaboration with the Singaporean Government, it is to our advantage, Madam Speaker. It will consist of the streamlining of processes of a number of Government agencies, such as the Office of the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the delivery of a host of mobile applications. So you do not have to come right to Suva to get a Birth Certificate. You can be in Vanua Levu, you can be in Nayau and you can be in Nukunuku in Lakeba because of this sort of platform.

Madam Speaker, we see that it is about all Fijian families, they matter. If you are giving birth, you can register from Lakeba, Taveuni or wherever. You do not have to pay your boat fare or airplane fare to come right to Suva to get this, and this is why it is to the advantage of our Fijian people.

Madam Speaker, \$19 million is allocated to the *Walesi* Programme to cater for the completion of the roll-out and enhancement of services to include provision of data delivery and OTT services. Every Fijian currently has access to *Walesi* and I continue to repeat this that it is there, it is for us for the taking. If we want things to improve in our country then this sort of platforms are an advantage to us.

Madam Speaker, \$300,000 is provided to expand internet connection to a total of 371 schools, equipping teachers and students with access to technology that will help improve learning outcomes and prepare for future e-learning initiatives. This is another programme that we can look forward to because students do not have to come right to the mainland to get all this sort of programmes, Honourable Speaker, we are moving forward, leaving no one behind.

Upgrading of ICT infrastructure will gradually improve and expand e-Government services. Government Fibre Optic Network Project makes critical upgrade to the Govnet network for the country.

Madam Speaker, as we go around the country today we see billboards in bold letters, "All Fijian Families Matter."

Improving the livelihoods of Fijian families is something dear to my heart. For over 24 years, my wife and I have been working with an NGO called Marriage Ministries International, now better known worldwide as "2=1 International Ministries". This Ministry equips and trains couples on how to better lives spiritually which is the foundation for families.

Madam Speaker, last year, Fiji acceded to the Report on the Hague Convention of the Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation of respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children (1996 Convention).

Parental responsibility has been highlighted in this Convention and it says, “Parental responsibility is defined in Article 1 of the 1996 Convention as including parental authority or any analogue relationship of authority determining the rights, powers and responsibilities of parents, guardians or other legal representatives in relation to the person or the property of the child.

All mothers and fathers have legal rights and responsibilities as a parent and will have greater powers than any other including the State over the child, known as parental responsibility.

Madam Speaker, the most important role as parents is to build an excellent child-parent relationship. This relationship has to be fostered on love and respect for human dignity. The parent will provide everything at their disposal for the upbringing of a well-balanced child in spirit, soul and body.

Parents play an irreplaceable role in the lives of their children. This vital relationship positively impacts on a child’s physical, mental and emotional well-being. The right of parents to maintain a strong involvement in their children’s lives is very important.

Good parenting is the foundation of a successful family but tragically, the foundation of parenthood is being slowly eroded. To secure the foundation of parenthood for this generation and the next, it is important that legislation is put in place to explicitly protect the child/parent relationship from unreasonable intrusion from outside the family institution, legislation to address the rights of parents to raise their children will be a way forward for Fiji.

The Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, 2013, Chapter 2 Section 41 addresses the “Rights of Children”. 1925 US Supreme Court Ruling - *Pierce vs Society of Sister*, “The Child is not a mere creature of the State”. Those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty to recognise and prepare him for additional obligations. Parents are also responsible for:

- disciplining the child;
- choosing and providing for the child’s education;
- agreeing to the child’s medical treatment;
- naming the child and agreeing to any change of name; and
- looking after the child’s property.

Parents have to ensure that their child is supported financially whether they have parental responsibility or not. Nobody ever said, Madam Speaker, that children were easy to raise. They do not come with guidelines or instructions and they certainly do not come with a pause button. What they do come with is a crucial set of physical and emotional needs that must be met. Failure of parents to meet these specific needs can have wide-ranging and long-lasting negative effects.

There are essential responsibilities that parents must adhere to in order to foster their child’s physical and/or emotional wellbeing, that is:

- provide an environment that is safe;
- provide the child with basic needs;
- provide the child with self-esteem needs;
- teach child moral values;
- develop mutual respect with the child;
- provide discipline which is effective and appropriate;

- involve in the child's education; and
- get to know the child by spending quality time together - communicate, communicate and communicate.

Although a parent's role in their children's learning evolves as kids grow, one thing remains constant, we are our children's learning models. Our attitudes is about education can inspire theirs and show them how to take charge of their own educational journey. Be a role model for learning. In the early years parents are their children's first teacher. When a young child begins formal school the parent's job is to show him or her how school can extend the learning beginning together at home, and how exciting and meaningful this learning can be. Parents become their children's learning coach.

In regards to marriage, Madam Speaker, it has been recommended....

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Honourable Member, you are not to go away from the Budget debate, please, link what you are saying to the Budget. You may carry on, thank you.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am just linking to the family because the Budget is focused on the family, and that is why I am connecting it on the family.

HON. SPEAKER.- Clearly, you are spending a lot of time more than on the Budget. This is a Budget debate.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is so crucial because a lot of the Budget has been allocated to the women's...

HON. SPEAKER.- I have made my ruling, please, Honourable Member.

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I had just returned from Singapore yesterday, Madam Speaker, attending a conference that is focused on raising the next generational of leaders. As we see that it has been put up that 60 percent of our population is below the age of 40 and it is so important that we have structures in place and nine years of steady growth by this Government is unprecedented, Madam Speaker.

This budget is a family budget. This budget is inclusive and does not segregate or discriminate along ethnic, religious, colour or creed and so I say, "All Fijian families matter". Finally, Madam Speaker, I fully support the 2018-2019 Budget presented by the Honourable Minister for Economy in this august House on June 28th. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call the Honourable Ratu Tevita Niumataiwalu to have the floor.

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members of Parliament, dignitaries, guests in the gallery, family members watching television from homes and those listening to this over the radio: I wish to acknowledge the presence of the *Momo na Tui Nadi* and his delegation from the *vanua* of Nadi in this House this morning. *Muju cola riki na Momo na Tui Nadi*.

I thank God for giving me this honour this morning to respond to the Minister for Economy's Address on the 2018-2019 Budget Address.

I agree with my fellow Opposition Members on this side of the House who have spoken before me that the 2018-2019 Budget does not tell Fijian families the truth. The Government does not care.

Madam Speaker, being the latest to enter Parliament and representing voters amounting to 1,833, I have witnessed very limited tangible benefits to rural dwellers.

Madam Speaker, I declare this morning that I have two hats: as a representative of the people; and a community leader of the District of Namuka in Macuata. So my rebuttal will be based on my two roles and may overlap to benefit voters in the Northern Division.

Madam Speaker, I am very proud to name the 11 villages in the *Tikina* of Namuka in this august House namely; Visoqo, Ravuka, Cawadevo, Matainadoi, Nasovivi, Lakeba, Naua, Nabubu, Qelewara, Salevukoso, Delaivadra, the islands of Druadrua and Gevo and settlements of Silivakatini, Vatuteqevi, including those villages in my neighbouring districts of Nadogo, Dogotuki and Udu who have similar issues such as:

- resource development;
- empowerment of women;
- empowerment of youths;
- enhancing education development; and
- the needs of infrastructure development.

Madam Speaker, even though we may have our resources, our source of income available, our land and fishing ground, the fact remains that the above is a recurring issue that we have been requesting Government for capital assistance, guidance and advice for the past years.

Madam Speaker, we need consultative process in addressing the above issues that will bring tangible results rather than the top-down approach. Even though, I may be addressing basic things, needs or issues from the North, my intention is with regard to the basic things in the North based on the reality on the ground. My intention may overlap to benefit general voters in the rural areas which I reckon should have been addressed by this Budget but it has been neglected.

Madam Speaker, I wish to comment over the budget allocation. We, on the Opposition side of the House, are very much concerned with the allocation of the Budget of the Requisition to Incur Expenditure (RIE). This Budget has a total expenditure estimated at \$4.6 billion, arguably the biggest in Fiji's history but what has emerged following the scrutiny by SODELPA is that \$2.1 billion of that Budget or 45 percent is under RIE. That, Madam Speaker, means that this amount may not be spent and worse, it is not under the control of the relevant Minister but under the control of the Minister for Economy.

Further scrutiny of the Budget by SODELPA reveals that out of the \$4.6 million Budget, \$3.5 billion come under the responsibility of the Minister for Economy while all the Ministers control only \$1.1 billion. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Allow me to relate facts on how honest the Government cares about Fijian families. Madam Speaker, I recall in 2015 on the directive of the Honourable Prime Minister and upon our request to the Prime Minister's Office, the *Tikina* of Namuka was consulted by the then Divisional Education Officer Northern then, Mr. Kolinio Takali, for the need of a secondary school in Namuka. The Divisional Education Officer confirmed estimation of \$400,000 had been submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister but that will be tabled in the next financial year, however, Madam Speaker the request parked at the Prime Minister's Office. This is the fact, Madam Speaker, of how the family matters, they do not care.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, during Honourable Prime Minister's first visit in Namuka in 2016 through a *talanoa* session, we questioned about the initiative of a proposed Secondary School in Namuka but the *talanoa* was meekly diverted to Nadogo Central College boarding fees.

On the same tour, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister for Education then, Honourable Mahendra Reddy, they promised to subsidise boarding fees at Nadogo Central College at \$100 per term, parents and guardians to contribute the other \$100. However, the promise was not fulfilled by the Government. The parents, guardians, families are now back to square one paying \$200 boarding fees. Madam Speaker, this is the fact which the family matters; they do not care.

Madam Speaker, however, I give credit to the Government for fulfilling some of what had been promised by the Honourable Prime Minister, but still, there are many promises that need to be met.

Madam Speaker, there is more to development as the saying goes. The 2018-2019 Budget merely was not well planned as alluded by the Shadow Minister of Finance. The tax burden cuts across the general population, rather than taxing the rich. The Budget is pro rich and pro-business.

Madam Speaker, opening the Public Rental Board housing in Savusavu Town last week denies landowners participation in housing development and that is the alternative that SODELPA will introduce to empower the resource owners thus eliminating misunderstanding.

On access to land, Madam Speaker, in Fiji politics, land is very relevant because of its precious value. *iTaukei* have to be acknowledged for giving their land then to develop the modern Fiji. A case for instance – Monasavu Issue in Naitasiri, Ketenatukani issue in Lautoka City and Suva land owned by Suvavou. I also wish to raise in this august House the status of the state land that were approved by the *iTaukei* Land Trust Board to be reverted to its original *iTaukei* landowners. Further to that, our freehold land in Namuka known as *Ulubuta* land which was purchased by NLTB that time, now *iTLTB* and sold it without considering the plight and countless others.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- Now most of the *iTaukei* wants a fair share of return of their land of which have been acquired by the Government or private holders. The 2018-2019 Budget, Madam Speaker, has very limited provision in addressing this issue.

Madam Speaker, the Government does not adhere to the Preamble of the 2013 Constitution and I quote:

“We, the people of Fiji recognising the indigenous people or the *iTaukei*, their ownership of *iTaukei* lands, their unique culture, customs, traditions and language”

Roads and Drains, Madam Speaker, the condition of roads in the Northern Division in rural areas are often in a pathetic state, due to the inconsistency of maintenance. Most roads are flooded due to improper drainage and poor design of roads. The North is known to be a neglected zone, despite the Honourable Prime Minister's comment at Labasa last week, on the wave of development prevailing in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I wish to question why the Macuata Provincial Council Development lease was not renewed, that gave way to the Damodar Company today. This indicates that the Government is unsupportive of the *iTaukei* business development.

Madam Speaker, within 15 years (from 1993 to 2003) of operation, the Macuata House, the Macuata Holdings have paid more than \$7 million as loan repayment to Fiji Development Bank and still has principal debt of \$3.2 million to offset.

Madam Speaker, for empowerment purposes of *iTaukei* business development, I share that such arrangements should have bailed out Macuata Holdings Limited. This is the alternative that the SODELPA Party will introduce.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, I also mentioned because it does not directly address the plight of rootcrop farmers in the rural areas in terms of capital grant, similar to cane farmers grant.

On Police Community Post, Madam Speaker, due to the geographical location in the North, we are vulnerable and there is a desperate need to establish police posts in the rural communities. Border control for policing the illegal transit of hard drugs in the form of cocaine and marijuana have to be a priority, like the one last week in Lau. Human trafficking must come to mind.

Health, Madam Speaker, the fact remains that the issue of health is vital for the welfare of the nation. Non-Communicable Disease is on the rise because of the ignorance of people to maintain the lifestyle of older generation. People were caught in the web of change and advertisement of major companies. The Government need to provide initiatives to motivate Fijian families to plant fresh vegetables and crops.

On *i-Taukei* affairs, Madam Speaker, the Provincial Office is a Government department under the Ministry of *iTaukei* Affairs, as had been alluded to by the Honourable Tui Cakau. The roles and responsibilities are similar with other departments in Ministries that provide service to all Fijians. Their operating fund used to be provided by the Government until 2010. The Budget fails to recognise and address this critical matter. Majority of Fijian families are being victimised.

Madam Speaker, the 2018-2019 Budget failed to address equal plight of the Fijian families and the Government is not telling the truth to all the Fijians which matters.

On environment, Madam Speaker, in the Northern Division, we believe that a holistic approach is the true way for preservation, conservation and sustaining the environment resources naturally rich and is made available.

Madam Speaker, the initiative of our nation controlling the steering of COP 23 with its allocation of millions and millions of dollars is futile and senseless because logically, I believe climate change is God's business. The solution, Madam Speaker, we, the people, are God's creations, to justify the Righteous by giving Him according to His righteousness and we must humble ourselves, and I quote from *II Chronicles 7:14*:

“If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek myself and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and heal our land.”

That is the solution for climate change, Madam Speaker.

Wainikoro Fishing Cooperative, Madam Speaker, is to provide fishing business facilities for our respective district in the North Eastern coast of Macuata, *Tikina* of Nadogo, Namuka, Udu, Dogotuki and

the *Tikina* of Tawake in the Province of Cakaudrove. The Budget failed to address this issue, despite being asked in the last sitting of Parliament as a supplementary question.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, the 2018-2019 Budget does not address this issue, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, Labasa Town is the central town of the Northern Division. There is a need to improve the municipal facilities.

On access road, the Fijian families in the North are desperate to have a second bypass in and out of Labasa Town to ease traffic jam. There is a need for the relocation of the bus stand and the market to avoid congestion. Again, the 2018-2019 Budget fails to address this issue that has been raised in this House in the last sitting.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, the Budget failed to address the plight of the Fijian families and the Government is not telling the truth to the Fijian families.

Madam Speaker, may I conclude, upon listening, perusal and through deliberations over the 2018-2019 Budget, I am compelled to draw the following conclusion, the process of preparing the plan for the Budget was not professional, there was no thorough consultation with the respective stakeholders, sectors, services and the general public.

(Chorus of interjections)

Most of the new initiatives were not properly thought out. It fail to address most of the basic things and basic needs of the Fijian families. Prioritising was very poor. The Budget itself promotes inequality. It only benefitted a category of some Fijian families and majority of the Fijian families have been neglected.

Madam Speaker, if we continue to entertain this trend of leadership in Fiji, I am certain that we are driving our nation to a pessimistic destination. This is the truth, and that this Government does not care about Fijian families.

Madam Speaker, I concur with the Honourable Members of the Opposition in opposing the 2018-2019 Budget Estimates and I put forward that the Budget be reviewed and based on the principle of good governance.

(Honourable Members interject)

Once again Madam Speaker, I thank you sincerely, the Parliamentary secretariat, the Honourable Opposition Leader and Honourable Members who gave me assistance and guidance to enable me to perform my parliamentary duty. May God Bless you and Bless Fiji. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. We will now adjourn the proceedings and we will break for morning tea. We will resume at 11.15 a.m. Thank you, Honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.52 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.16 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call on the Honourable Assistant Minister for Health to have the floor.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Cabinet Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament, members of the public in the gallery and those watching these proceedings from the comfort of their homes: A very good morning to you all.

Madam Speaker, before I proceed with my contribution to the Budget Debate, I wish to comment on the Honourable Parmod Chand's revelation of the state of our hospitals and wish to ask him, when was the last time he visited one of these facilities? For the information of this august House, the Ministry was allocated \$7.4 million in this Budget for the outsourcing of janitorial and security services to which the Ministry has engaged the services of a new commercial cleaning contractor.

Furthermore, I am appalled by his comments and dubious assumptions about the proposed Public Private Partnership. It shows how desperate he is to gain his political mileage by misleading the people and spreading lies. It is time the opposite side of the House speaks the truth for it is only the truth that will set them free. These cheap political ploy implanted by some of their own self-interest will not deceive the general public nor will it deter us from achieving the best for the Fijian people.

They know they have a government which prioritises the welfare of our Fijian communities through realisation of strategic plans and policies which is taking our health services to a new level.

Madam Speaker, the Government through the Public Private Partnership is committed to broaden the new range of new medical services, including tertiary care, better maternity care for more Fijian mothers and expanding treatment and procedures for non-communicable diseases, including the availability of open heart surgeries in Fiji.

Madam Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to address this august House as the Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services on the 2018-2019 Budget. Foremost, I wish to sincerely thank our Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister for Economy, for providing this comprehensive budget to the Ministry of Health and Medical Services that includes an increase of \$13.9 million from the previous year.

I wish to also thank the Ministry of Economy staff, led by the illustrious Permanent Secretary for a job well done, for performing the arduous task of putting together a very conclusive Budget. Madam Speaker, whilst what I am about to contribute may seem repetitive as may be alluded to by my line Minister and other Honourable Members on this side of the House, I wish to re-emphasise the importance of Public Health.

Madam Speaker, in my address on the 2017-2018 Budget, I did mention that I had travelled far and wide within our island nation and had gained a fair understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of our health system, through frank discussions with our local advisors, leaders and communities. In addition, I have inspected 185 out of a total of 202 health facilities in the rural and maritime communities across Fiji, most of which were in disrepair and grossly neglected by previous administrations.

Once such case, Madam Speaker, is at the village of Levuka-i-Daku in Matuku. When receiving my *sevusevu* or presentation, the elder of the village said, and I quote:

“Mr. Assistant Minister, this is the first time a Minister has visited this nursing station since it was opened by Dr. Kuruisaqila in 1973, who arrived in a helicopter. After he opened

the facility he had a cup of coffee and before boarding the helicopter he told us he will return. He since has passed on.”

I aim to complete visitations to the remaining 17 and as such, have planned to undertake this task over the next few weeks, including Rotuma.

Madam Speaker, with the increased 2018-2019 Budget allocation, the Ministry will significantly invest in the upgrade and expansion of the health facilities, construction of new facilities and equipping all health facilities in the country with modern medical equipment.

Madam Speaker, apart from the health facilities, the Ministry has made great efforts to enhance the transportation services. I am pleased to say that as such, the Ministry’s ambulances have been increased, marine vessels have been repaired and now operable, and the aged Ministry owned vehicles have been replaced with Government-leased vehicles.

Madam Speaker, allocations have also been made to accommodate the transportation needs of those Fijian families in the maritime and rural areas. There is an increased allocation of \$500,000 in this year’s Budget for the purchase of boats and outboards, as follows:

- Eastern Division - \$200,000;
- Western Division - \$200,000; and
- Northern Division - \$100,000.

Those funds will be directed towards the purchase of new boats, and for the repair and maintenance of boats and outboard motors to assist in improving accessibility to primary healthcare services in those hard-to-reach places.

Madam Speaker, this Budget is truly and rightfully a family-friendly Budget and as the Assistant Minister responsible for Public Health, I welcome the allocation of \$12.7 million to this activity.

Public Health Programmes through outreach to schools and communities, continue to focus on ensuring our people remain healthy where they live, work, learn and play. Indeed, Madam Speaker, this Budget is about unleashing new opportunities to empower families, as strong families are the foundation for building a progressive Fiji.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, the Public Health has one of the key challenges that is encountered both, locally and internationally, the escalating number of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) which kills 41 million people each year or is equivalent to 71 percent of all deaths globally.

Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCDs deaths followed by cancers, respiratory diseases, as well as diabetes. These four groups of diseases account for over 80 percent of all premature NCD deaths.

Excessive tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy processed diets, all increase the risk of dying from an NCD. When one consumes lots of sugar, oil and salt, it doubles or increases the risks of diseases, like hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services NCD interventions is delivered through Primary Health Care approach to strengthen early detection and timely treatment. Evidence shows such interventions are excellent economic investments because if provided early to patients, they can reduce the need for more expensive treatment at secondary and tertiary care.

NCDs are lifestyle diseases that is preventable through the family lifestyle choices and decisions one makes.

Madam Speaker, addressing NCDs on a national level requires comprehensive and multi-sectoral partnership between the health authorities, Non-governmental Organisations, families and communities; in a nutshell, everyone. And most importantly, it takes political will to make policies that affect the lifestyle choices of every individual.

As an ongoing efforts to restructure the Wellness Programme to intensify the community outreach, there are four pillars that will form the Wellness Fiji Framework and Policy. These would include; interventions at Nursing Stations, Health Centres and Sub-Divisional Hospitals where all the health professionals at these levels of care will be trained in wellness advocacy as a critical component of their role.

This significant change will aim to reduce both, NCDs, as well as Communicable Diseases (CDs). As such, investing in the better management of NCDs and CDs is critical through proper diagnosis, screening and treatment.

Madam Speaker, the 2018-2019 Budget provides us with strategic innovation policies that will strengthen Fiji's ongoing efforts to combat NCDs and CDs, an initiative that has been widely appreciated by the general public and that will result in positive impact for every Fijian family.

The reduction of the fiscal import duty on fruits and vegetables from 5 percent to zero percent is Government's initiative to promoting healthy lifestyles, prolonged longevity and combat NCDs.

Mothers will now spend more time with their newborn babies with the increase in Maternity Leave entitlement to 98 days, re-emphasising the importance of a bond between mother and child, and also allowing them a longer time to breastfeed which we very much encourage as a safeguard against malnutrition. For the first time, fathers will have a five-day Paternity Leave and a five-day Family Care Leave.

The Ministry will shortly be embarking on a primary health programme to provide all community health workers with the dedicated dispensary to house the essential drugs and resources within the village boundaries. Consideration will also be given to having these dispensaries equipped with PCs, to capture patient data to support the Patient Information System or PATIS.

The Ministry will also focus on strengthening the health workforce and improving health information systems.

While Government is putting extensive resources behind upgrading the nation's healthcare network, it remains dedicated to keeping the cost of healthcare in Fiji to a bare minimum, as affordable healthcare is a fundamental and constitutionally-enshrined right of every Fijian.

Madam Speaker, at this point in time, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the doctors, nurses, allied health workers and all our stakeholders both, locally and internationally, who continue to work diligently, conscientiously and remain passionate to the calling to provide the best healthcare services.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank our development partners, namely the UN Agencies, World Health Organisation, UNICEF, DFAT, the Diplomatic Corp, NGOs, CSOs and FBOs, whose contributions play a vital role in supporting our health system. I also wish to put on record our

appreciation for the work of volunteers and charitable organisations both, here and overseas, who are so generous in their gifts of time, skills and other resources to deliver or fund much needed services.

I look forward to continue working together with the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services, in taking forward the Ministry's vision of developing a healthy population.

With that, Madam Speaker, I fully support the Budget, and I thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Assistant Minister for Agriculture to have the floor.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to contribute, like other Honourable Members have spoken before me and offer my congratulations to the Honourable Minister for Economy for a well-thought and articulated 2018-2019 National Budget.

Madam Speaker, the increased allocation of \$96.8 million to the Ministry of Agriculture indicates the seriousness with which the FijiFirst Government views agriculture development in Fiji. This Budget gives flexibility to the Ministry of Agriculture and stakeholders in terms of forming partnerships with each other to address common challenges that impact the growth in the sector.

Madam Speaker, Government identifies the urgent need to increase the budget allocated to the Ministry, out of its concern for the mainly rural-based and mostly remote farming communities in Fiji. Government has also shown through this budget, its commitment to the uplifting of individuals through economic empowerment as a way and means of building a dynamic economy.

The various programmes to be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture under this new budget will contribute immensely to fixing those challenges that currently limit the abilities of our rural people to unlock their true economic potential in the agriculture sector.

Madam Speaker, the general increases in most of the allocations under the Ministry of Agriculture budget means an increase in the number of rural communities and individuals to be assisted. This will result in the increased activities and interaction between agriculture Officials, farmers and the private sector. It will also lead to a general improvement in service delivery, taking into consideration the impacts of the current Civil Service Reform.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture through its various programmes, offers assistance that can guide individuals to active commercial agriculture production. There are range of programmes that address challenges in crop and livestock production faced by our farmers. This is in terms of Crop and Livestock Commodity Development Programme, land clearing and preparation, farm access, farm house, soil testing kits, new research activities, land degradation activities and our links to stakeholders. The successful implementation of those Programmes should lead to increased agriculture production for domestic food needs and exports.

Madam Speaker, allow me to elaborate on the 2018-2019 Budget and highlight various programmes under the Crop Extension Services for this financial year 2018-2019.

Crop Commodity Development Programmes. Rice: Madam Speaker, the Rice Revitalisation Programme has been allocated \$1 million in the 2018-2019 financial year. The volume of rice produced continue to increase at an annual growth rate of 16 percent for the past five years. In 2017, the total rice production amounts to 9,000 tons.

For the past five years, both volume and value of rice import have been decreasing at an annual average rate of 20 percent to 19 percent respectively. A total of 1,038 rice farmers were recorded in 2016.

The recent opening of the new Rice Mill, Fiji Rice Limited, at Dreketi will provide opportunities to our rice farmers to produce more, given that the Mill needs to sustain itself in the long run. This budget will focus on increasing production by assisting rice farmers with the procurement of rice machines, rice seeds, agro-inputs and provision of technical support. This includes, assisting farmers with large holdings on a one-third: two-third basis for procurement of small machines.

Dalo: Madam Speaker, *dalo* remains the top export commodity, earning an annual average value of \$23 million over the past five years. The 2018-2019 Budget will focus on increasing *dalo* production through provision of quality planting materials and agro-inputs, infrastructure support and clustering of farmers. There are 6,902 *dalo* farmers recorded in 2016.

The Ministry has completed the Fiji Taro Industry Plan 2018-2022, which targets to increase *dalo* exports to around 7,000 tonnes annually.

Coconut: Madam Speaker, the coconut industry in Fiji is one of the major agricultural industry for food and income livelihood. Over the years, our rural dwellers rely heavily on coconut as a source of food, employment and income security. The volume of coconut export (fresh and value added) has been steadily increasing in the last five years, with an average annual growth rate of 3 percent.

Madam Speaker, the 2018-2019 Budget will support replanting of coconut trees and development of coconut products to increase economic opportunities.

Cocoa: Madam Speaker, the Cocoa Revitalisation allocated budget will focus on the expansion of the existing cocoa plantations to meet the growing demand for organic cocoa and gourmet boutique chocolate.

The scope of implementation will include setting up of farmers' associations, capacity building of cocoa farmers, assistance to acquire bio-grow organic licences, rehabilitation of the 120 hectares of existing cocoa farming areas in Namau, Matasawalevu, Colata and Navuniivi, and expansion of other small growers that guarantees better cocoa yield.

The Ministry will partner with the Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR) to receive technical assistance to improve the volume and quality of cocoa beans, and the additional funding requested will support this co-operation and increase revitalisation activities.

Yaqona: Madam Speaker, kava is the second largest export earner, which has generated income stability and employment opportunities in agriculture sector. Kava exports were valued at \$19 million in 2017 and is well positioned to take advantage of those emerging market opportunities. The programme will assist the industry, consolidate production in existing *yaqona* growing areas, introduce mechanisation, cultivation of noble varieties to improve quality, reduce rejection rates through farmer training, technical services and monitoring of cultivation, harvesting and post-harvesting and strengthening market linkages between buyers/exporters and farmers. The total number of *yaqona* farmers recorded in 2016 is 12,192.

This year, the Ministry launched the second Kava Book which is the first comprehensive study that has been carried out for the kava sector. It complements our efforts to improve the consistency and the reliability of kava production and also to grow exports of higher quality kava products.

Pineapple, Madam Speaker, is a drought-tolerant crop as that is suitable in the dry areas of the country and is a complementary crop to sugarcane. Fiji's pineapple industry has been consistently performing well over the years. The average volume produced annually in the last five years amounted to 5,000 metric tonnes. Our main export markets for pineapple are New Zealand, Canada, Nauru and other Pacific Islands.

On the other hand, volume of import has also been consistently increasing at an average volume of 0.46 metric tonnes annually for the last five years which is mainly due to increased demand from the tourism sector. This analysis warrants Government's intervention to increase local pineapple production and improve quality to meet the demand of the tourism sector.

This Budget will also support pineapple farmers in the provision of agro-inputs, planting materials, farm implements and will focus mainly in the major producing areas such as Tailevu, Ba, Bua and Macuata.

Bilateral Quarantine Agreement (BQA): Fiji has 49 commodities under the BQA that has opened access export to New Zealand. Fiji is the only country that can supply fresh *okra* and *duruka* to NZ. There is a growing Pacific population in New Zealand and Pacific Island countries are not meeting their demand for fresh fruits and vegetables. The 2018-2019 Budget will address this problem through the provision of agro-inputs and post-harvest handling to our BQA farmers.

Land Preparation Facilities: Madam Speaker, the 2018-2019 Budget on Land Preparation Programme will continue to assist farmers with land clearing and land preparation activities including ploughing, harrowing, ridging and drainage. The facility is one of the best, given that the cost of the land preparation is quite expensive.

This programme is the FijiFirst Government's initiative since it was elected in 2014. In 2017, there were 543 farmers assisted under the programme, 293 in the Central Division, 228 in the Western Division and 22 in the Northern Division. The main target of this budget is to ensure that the Ministry continues to support more farmers in the next fiscal year.

Farm Access: Madam Speaker, the programme involves the construction and upgrading of farm roads to facilitate the transportation of inputs to the farm and agricultural produce to the markets. The main beneficiaries of farm roads will be small scale farmers who live along the main road corridors, village traders and large farmers who provide most of the transport for goods to the market.

The 2018-2019 Budget will target the following areas:

- Northern Division – 30 kilometres, including the *Tikina* of Dogotuki and *Tikina* of Namuka, with an estimated 200 hectares of land developed mostly for *dalo* and *yaqona* in the next three years.
- Central Division - 18 kilometres, benefitting 600 farmers; 210 hectares of land developed mostly for vegetables, root crops and livestock after the first year.
- Western Division – 3 kilometres.
- Eastern Division – 4 kilometres.

Farm Houses: Madam Speaker, the construction of farm houses is vital to farming households or cluster groups. The objective of this activity is to allow farmers or cluster groups to maximise farm hours on their farms on a daily basis rather than travelling to their farms which normally takes time to

reach. For the past five years, the Ministry has constructed around 65 farm houses throughout Fiji for individuals, youth and cluster groups. We will also be working closely with the farmers to have more farm houses in the *Tikina* of Dogotuki and *Tikina* of Namuka.

Livestock: Madam Speaker, a total of \$15 million has been allocated for the Livestock Programme. The focus of this programme is to increase stock numbers while addressing the occurrence of animal disease at the same time. It is worthy to note that the fight against Brucellosis and Tuberculosis will be an ongoing battle for the Ministry, given the nature of transmission of the two diseases, coupled with the devastating effects of these diseases outbreak to the livestock industry. The Ministry is having discussions with stakeholders, including our bilateral partners on how best to roll out some short-term and long-term solutions in the face of this crisis in the dairy industry.

Goat Development: Madam Speaker, the volume of goat production for the last five years have been consistently increasing at an annual average rate of 27 percent. The only fresh and chilled goat meat exported in the last five years was in 2015 and 2016 where Fiji exported to Nauru an average volume of 78 kilogrammes.

The new Goat Extension Programme budget of \$200,000 will focus its activities on the five private multiplication centres Fiji-wide; two in the Northern Division and three in the Western Division. This will include renovation of infrastructures, development and implementation of goat breeding programmes in order to meet farmers' demand for quality breeding stock.

These farms will be supplied with new genetics from the Government research stations to improve quality of stock and later supply good breeding stock to the commercial farms and cluster groups. Furthermore, it will focus on the establishment of fattening farms, renovation of infrastructures and pastures to link smallholder farmers to channel quality stock through formal market structure.

The additional \$1 million allocated will ensure establishment of Fiji's goat meat industry through the provision of services and infrastructural development, such as slaughterhouse that will grow the industry to new heights. In addition, commercial farmers and smallholder farmers will be formed into clusters to channel quality stock through the slaughterhouse to formal markets. These smallholder farmers will also be assisted with renovation of infrastructure and nutrition improvement.

Livestock Rehabilitation: Madam Speaker, the livestock rehabilitation budget will focus on the dairy and beef industries through improved disease control, research and support for increased farm production. The 2018-2019 Programme will fund the following activities:

- Embryo transfer programme in beef and dairy;
- Sheep Breed Improvement Programme at Nawaicoba and Batiri;
- Dairy stock improvement and infrastructure improvement at Koronivia;
- Dairy office equipment, plants, machines and equipment at Koronivia.

Todate, 144 embryo have been transferred to 144 cows in Sigatoka and Koronivia Research Stations and they are expected to give birth to around 72 calves. These stock will form part of the nucleus herd which will be the source of genetic improvement on the private farms. The new resilient breeds include; Senepol, Drought Master, Wagiu for beef production and Brown Swiss for dairy production. The Brown Swiss breed is a proven performer under the hot and humid weather conditions.

Dairy Industry Support: Madam Speaker, the programme in the past years have been focusing on infrastructure development, targeting the establishment of development of smallholder dairy farms. Today, a total of 131 farms in the cane belt areas in the Western Division have been established which contribute to 9.8 percent of milk production in 2017.

Additionally, in the Central Division, smallholders' contribution has increased from 55 percent to 66 percent of total milk produced in 2017. For the 2018-2019 Budget, the programme will focus on the following targeted activities: improvement of school dairies, calf-rearing programme, water reticulation and expansion of dairy farms to potential areas.

Pig Extension Programme: Madam Speaker, the volume of pork production in Fiji increased by 69 percent from 2016 to 2017. The industry also achieved a significant increase in the total value of export from \$8,000 in 2016 to \$22,000 in 2017 on fresh and chilled commodities. However, import for this commodity has been consistently increasing at an annual average growth rate of 26 percent for the past five years.

The main objective of Piggery Extension Development Programme is to introduce significant intervention measures and a move to address the increasing trend of import and the declining trend of the quality of pig supply to the registered slaughterhouses.

Madam Speaker, in the previous years, the pig commodity received financial support from Waste Management and Rural Outer Island (ROI) programme which is shared with other communities. As a result, there has been a continuous decline in carcass weight recorded by the registered slaughterhouses.

However, with the new funding, it is certain to make a difference in terms of better nutrition and good dressing weights. The scope of activities will include breed improvement, nutrition improvement, infrastructure improvement, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation.

Poultry Extension Programme: Madam Speaker, in 2017 the poultry production showed a positive growth of 10 percent with an export earnings of around \$4 million. Fiji exports most of its poultry to neighbouring Pacific Island countries.

The 2018-2019 Budget allocated for Poultry Extension Development will be able to support development for broiler farms and smallholder duck farms, including the provision of incubation units and egg grading machines.

In addition, it will enable the industry to provide much needed animal protein to the increasing population through vertical integration. The improved breeds will focus on the immediate recovery while resilience breeds will focus to address disaster risk mitigation in the rural and outer island. The scope of implementation will include the improvement of broiler, procurement of egg grading machines and capacity building.

Crop Research: Madam Speaker, in 2016 to 2017 the Ministry's Research Division conducted a survey that revealed a 30 percent increase in the population of coconut rhinoceros beetles. The upsurge in this pest population is a direct result on the damages incurred by the coconut industry after *TC Winston* in 2016. Major focused areas of coconut production in Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Taveuni, Kadavu, Lomaiviti and the Lau Group were covered in the survey.

The new budget will ensure management of coconut pests and setting up of control measures to combat this infestation. These involves the use of pheromone traps, biological control agents, such as virus and fungus for coconut rhinoceros beetle, bio agent for stick insects, coconut flat moth and scale insects.

New Varieties: Madam Speaker, the Crop Research Division has recently released two *taro* leaf blight tolerant varieties - *tarova loa* and *tarova vula* and a new *kumala* variety, "golden brown" for cultivation. This initiative is a proactive approach by the Ministry to ensure that we safeguard our *dalo* industry.

More than 170 farmers received the new variety at Koronivia Research Station during the launch last Friday. The farmers were encouraged to plant and share the materials with other farmers in their communities. The Ministry will maintain the materials at the Research Station for future use.

Madam Speaker, construction of cold storage facilities for farm produce, such as fruits, vegetables and rootcrops will enable farmers to better market their produce, increase their revenue and reduce food wastage. Construction will begin in this fiscal year on two facilities in Kavanagasau and Nukuloa, allowing farmers in those areas to maintain and sell fresh produce. The cold storage will maintain the quality of the produce and will also increase the amount of produce purchased from farmers.

The Ministry will continue with its efforts to grow and develop the agriculture sector and we will remain focused on a more sustainable and even development in the industry.

Madam Speaker, let me state that given the commitment made by Government to the Agriculture Sector under this budget, timeliness of implementation is critical if the objective of Government to grow the sector is to be achieved.

The Ministry of Agriculture will ensure that proper monitoring and evaluation systems are in place to monitor progress in the programme implementation. At the same time, we will continue to find efficiencies and streamline our processes so that these assistance are provided promptly and to those that need it most.

Madam Speaker, let me conclude by stating once again my appreciation to the Government and the Honourable Minister for Economy for presenting to Fijians a well-planned National Budget for the 2018-2019 financial year. This Budget will go a long way in uplifting the living standards of Fijians and enable us to build our economy for our future generation.

Madam Speaker, I extend my full support for the 2018-2019 National Budget. Thank you.

HON.SPEAKER.-Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Howard Politini to have the floor.

HON. H.R.T. POLITINI.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Minister for Economy, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Members of this august House, before I begin, I would like to also acknowledge the *Momo* the *Tui Nadi* and the *Vanua* of Nadi, who have joined us earlier on this morning.

Madam Speaker, I rise to address this Parliament on the actions our Government proposes to undertake in the coming financial year and the plans and hopes that the budget represents for people of Fiji. As the Honourable Minister for Economy said in his initial presentation to Parliament that this Budget FijiFirst has prepared and presented is first and foremost a budget for the people of our beloved land, one that contains initiatives that will make their lives better in many ways and one that our Government believes is the most responsible and planned use of their funds in so many ways. I must reiterate this budget, first and foremost, a budget for the people and our beloved land.

Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to talk to all members of the Fijian community about a budget that is spot-smart, responsible and inclusive of all the people of Fiji, on that is firmly based on the needs of our country to develop and to provide equal opportunity for each Fijian, whether they live in the cities and in the rural areas and in the larger islands or in the smaller communities in the outer islands. It is a Budget that considers the need and ambitions of all Fijians and opens up an opportunity for a better lifestyle to everyone regardless of age, gender or ethnicity as is expected by our 2013 Constitution.

Madam Speaker, since the presentation of the Budget in this august House by the Honourable Minister for Economy, the general acceptance of the paper has been overwhelmingly positive. Honourable Members on the other side of Parliament have said, both in this Parliament and in the wider community of Fiji, that this is a good, sound Budget and one that is considerable and reliable. It was stressed that this was a Budget designed to support and uplift the people of Fiji, that it was very much to assist Fijian families to continue to improve their lifestyles.

I will speak specifically on the plans for the education sector that are included in the Budget but first, Madam Speaker, let me say that the FijiFirst since the day we formed the Government, have been consistent in belief of the importance of education in the life of every Fijian.

Educating our children is the only way to break away the poverty cycle. Madam Speaker, one of the biggest reasons why our country's economic malice may last for decades is because of high school dropouts become unemployed and are essentially shut out of the job markets. Fiji has also had this problem of unemployment and the demands of the job markets for specialised field or profession is always in demand.

The Opposition needs to understand that education is the way Government can assist families and individuals, to create a better quality of life for the people which creates a positive ripple effect within our communities. It is simple - the better and more educated they get, the more likely they will avoid economic and social despair. The rewards flow into the communities in which they live with higher levels of home ownership, entrepreneurial activities and civic activities that lead to high quality of life that benefits everyone.

Madam Speaker, according to the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report, if all students in low income countries left school with elementary reading skills, millions could be lifted out of poverty. Education, Madam Speaker, is crucial for a growing and developing economy so that labour markets can be filled with a qualified and a young population.

There is a saying that goes, "There is only one thing that proves to be more expensive than education in life - that is the lack of it". If you provide children with quality education options, support families and children holistically in a community setting and enlist the support of universities as partners with the community, you produce better results and improve community outcomes. Then what happens eventually, the cycle of poverty breaks, one family at a time.

This, Madam Speaker, is the vision of the FijiFirst Government. Our Government's leader, the Honourable Prime Minister has always stated that the key to improvement in the life of every Fijians is an increase in the overall level of education in the community and each Budget we have presented has contained long term initiatives that are still in place and assisting every Fijian to seek and enter the level and form of education they wish to assist them in their life.

In other words, our Government has been carefully building the capacity of the education sector over the entire period we have been the Government. The vision of this Government is and always has been that the most important task was to improve the lifestyle of every Fijian and ensure that no one was left behind, and that the tool to effectively do that was to improve education. Continually improving education opportunities for each Fijian has been our objective and we have continuously met that objective.

Madam Speaker, improving education does not only mean making it available to more people, but what it means providing a higher standard of education through providing strong support and extra opportunities for each teacher to become more skilled and knowledgeable in their work. But it means providing a wider choice of the sort of education available ensuring that every Fijian can afford to access

that opportunity without placing undue stress on the remainder of the family. It requires the needs to be carefully examined and understood and for ways of meeting the needs to be greatly resolved.

Madam Speaker, the vision of the FijiFirst Government and our Honourable Prime Minister can only become reality if our nation can afford to provide every Fijian with their needs in education and we are fortunate that due to the historically long period of increasingly strong performance by the Fiji economy, our country now has the financial strength to grasp this vision. That is exactly what this current Budget does and we make no apology for that.

We ensure that we have created the Budget with care and responsibility to the people of Fiji as our primary benchmark. The only reason we can now propose a Budget of this magnitude, scope and balance is that, FijiFirst policies during our term in Government have allowed the country to achieve such unprecedented and consistent economic result as recognised by the multilateral agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Because of the current economy, we are ensuring our Government is confident that we can recommend this Budget Plan and the other billion dollar support in expenditure.

Madam Speaker, that is almost a quarter of the total recommended expenditure for the financial year and I assure you that we are making this commitment without taking away any needed funding from other areas.

We firmly believe that the increase activity in the education sector will directly lead to a better life for every Fijian. We will raise the living standard and we will prepare Fijians for a greater and more fulfilling future.

Madam Speaker, I now want to look at some of the initiatives the Budget will deliver. There is a plan to significantly increase the number and size of school buildings and other facilities, either by upgrading existing infrastructure or building new ones where none exist at the moment. Although there are significant number of people whose lives will benefit from a closer proximity to education facilities not only in the rural areas but in towns and cities around Fiji.

There are many new initiatives that are introduced in this Budget. Fiji is entering in a partnership with the Commonwealth of learning and organisation established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government that will give Fiji practitioners exposure to international expertise in key education areas such as technology, teacher training and high education management with the allocation of over \$150,000.

With a \$300,000 allocation, the National Curriculum will be reviewed, opening different learning tracks for students of varying skilled levels. \$200,000) is allocated to implement new schools Scouts Programme, to help children develop skills and self-reliance, teamwork, discipline and contribute to civic pride and nation-building. There is a significant need for an improved school counselling service and the allocation of \$300,000 will effectively provide services to a significant number of students who currently do not have the opportunity for counselling.

Funds are also allocated to a Training and Capacity Building Programme for School Librarians. \$300,000 is allocated to ensure all schools adhere to the WASH – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programme by building WASH facilities where required.

Madam Speaker, teachers are a critical part of the education system and \$700,000 is allocated to building and repair of teachers' quarters in schools around Fiji. There is also a \$2.8 million for subsidies for students who enrolled in ECCE Centres and \$500,000 to ensure ECCE centres and infant schools through the necessary equipment to support student learning. There is \$66.4 million allocated to tuition

fees funding to ensure that every Fijian child has an opportunity to receive primary and secondary education, without paying any school fees.

I note that the Leader of SODELPA outside this Parliament is now claiming that he started free education. What nonsense! Parents and students have been paying school fees all these years until the Bainimarama-led Government and now the FijiFirst Government made it truly free. This historic programme is commonly impacting the lives of thousands of Fijians and advancing our economy. There is much more, Madam Speaker, such as a \$21.6 million for Allocation Allowances for ECCE (primary and secondary teachers in the rural and remote areas).

The Bus Fare Assistance Programme for primary and secondary students costing \$25 million and the ongoing Free Milk Programme.

Cyclone Rehabilitation will continue for schools damaged by *Tropical Cyclones Winston, Keni, Josie* and *Gita* throughout Fiji and to allow many school buildings to be upgraded to International Cyclone Standards. Other items include; boats and engines for schools only accessible by waterways, funds to upgrade and equip the 13 technical colleges our Government introduced to assist, improve the delivery of curriculum and grants to specifically learn institutions for construction and repair programmes.

Another important programme that is already making higher education possible for many students is the Tertiary Education Loans Scheme (TELS) and funding has been increased by \$46.5 million from the \$205.6 million that was last budgeted. The number of higher education institutions, such as FNU, University of the South Pacific, University of Fiji, the Corpus Christi, Fulton College, Montfort Boys' Town, Montfort Technical Unit, Sangam Institute of Technology and Vivekananda Technical Centre, all shared the allocation of \$104 million to assist in improvement planned by their management.

There are a number of other allocations all designed to achieve our Government's objective of building a smarter and more productive Fiji.

Madam Speaker, I close by commending a close study of the education budget allocation and development of a good understanding of the strategies that are being applied to allow Fiji to reach the FijiFirst objectives, to improve the lifestyle and happiness of all Fijians and to make it possible for our people to contribute and participate on a level playing field for the economic growth of our beautiful country.

Madam Speaker, not only is the FijiFirst Government rebuilding and reshaping the infrastructure of our country, the FijiFirst Government is also investing in our young generation, building an educated and knowledge-based economy, enabling young men and women to get the knowledge they need to avoid poverty and adulthood.

With those remarks, Madam Speaker, I strongly support the 2018-2019 National Budget before this august House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I begin my response on the Budget, I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his comments on buttered lamb chops and beer. I realise that this food is below the standard served in the first class on his many overseas flights. I hope during the election campaign, he will spend less time flying high and more time closer to the ground so that he is in touch with the reality.

Madam Speaker, we have received a copy of the Honourable Prime Minister's speech, no doubt it is expertly packaged by Qorvis for distribution to the media, in fact, we know this. The Word version of the speech shows that it was last edited by a person called Shay Agnew. Who is Mr. Shay Agnew? We can find Mr. Agnew's identity on the internet. He is apparently a Geopolitical Solutions Consultant with Qorvis Communications, Madam Speaker.

The taxpayers of Fiji are paying Qorvis more than a million dollars per year to write those speeches. Perhaps, the million dollar Qorvis speechwriters could write something more important than lamb chops.

Madam Speaker, the Government says that the theme of the Budget is "All Families Matter." Let me offer an alternative theme, I call it 'Fear, Freebees and Failures'.

Madam Speaker, 12 years is a long time for one Government to be in power. Like all Governments that have held on for too long, this Government has become dictatorial, arrogant and out of touch. In fact, Madam Speaker, this Government is in a self-congratulatory trap. This Government does not rule by consensus, it does not rule by consultation, it rules by fear. But the Government, Madam Speaker, itself is afraid, it fears criticism, that is why only the Government is allowed to speak. Anyone who criticises the Government is victimised.

This has important implications for the economy and for the country. A Government that will not hear criticism, Madam Speaker, is not open to innovation. It is not open to new ideas and new ways of working. Whatever the Government says, it is the people, not the Government, who grow the economy. It is the people, not the Government, who know the economy but the Government does not want to hear, it does not want to be reminded about its failures.

This year, the Government has a new idea, "All Fijian families matter." Of course, this Budget is not really about Fijian families, it is about political propaganda.

Madam Speaker, two weeks before the Budget on the FijiFirst Party's black and blue billboards all over Fiji, what did we see? "All Fijian families matter." The Honourable Minister for Economy managed to say, "families", about 75 times in his Budget Address, and he thinks that if he repeats it enough times, the people will believe it.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Of course, Madam Speaker, Fijian families matter, Of course Fijian families matter, they have always mattered.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- One-third of Fijian families still live in poverty. Fijian families are dying from poor health, the Government thinks that it leads the world on climate change, it forgets that Fiji now leads the world in NCDs and diabetes. What about these families?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, next year, the Government will spend \$1.5 million on the Prime Minister's travel and \$3,000 daily allowances. This was what he spent last year but there are Fijian families who cannot even afford good food. Do these families matter?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- This year, the Government will spend \$8 million on a new Prime Minister's office but what about families waiting for their cyclone damaged houses to be built? Should we not build their houses first? Do these families matter?

Government spends millions of dollars every year on *Fiji Sun* advertisements and payments to Qorvis. But Fijian families are losing their homes because the Government will not fund kidney dialysis for their loved ones.

Two years after we brought this issue to the House, Madam Speaker, Government will now subsidise families who earn less than \$30,000 a year. But that support will be useless unless it is free treatment. Kidney dialysis will now cost \$150 per session. If it is subsidised by 50 percent, where will a family, earning less than \$30,000, find \$75 three times a week or \$225? The Government has spent \$50 million on its COP 23 Presidency, it is spending about \$10 million on hosting one single international conference this year.

Madam Speaker, our Government Ministers love to be pictured, shaking hands with the world's high and mighty. I have just talked about \$70 million in Government spending, none of this money, Madam Speaker, helps Fijian families.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, the amount of money that the Government has wasted after cyclones is actually a national scandal. It is so called, "Help for Homes" and Homes-CARE Schemes were hopelessly, hopelessly implemented. Tens of millions of dollars was handed out to people on smart cards. The hardware salesmen quickly signed them up and debited their cards, so the hardware merchants got the cash but the people waited for their building materials.

When it arrived, it came in dribs and drabs. The cement and nails arrived first, the timber and roofing iron came months later but by then some of the cement had dried up and was useless. So, Madam Speaker, how was it for these families, did they matter? Home-CARE money bought many Samsung mobile phones and television screens. But we ask, how many victims received the full amount of \$7,000? We were told during the last sating of Parliament that 56 households received it at that stage. But we visited the flood-stricken areas in the West, many, many homes were severely damaged. The families in those houses needed more than \$7,000, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- This is a Government that thinks that dishing our cheques solves every problem, but for some families, it is too much, for some families it is too little, and for some families it is too late. What about these families? Do these families matter?

Madam Speaker, the one thing that this Government can do very well is to spend public money
...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ... as long as someone is taking a photo. For years, it has handed out the so-called \$1,000 SME grants. For some reason, a Minister must always be there to give the cheques. If the Government company is paying off staff bonuses, the Honourable Minister for Economy will pop up, from now we had to smile and give the cheques.

(Laughter)

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- If there is an accident compensation payment to be made, mysteriously he will be there again to give the cheques. Now the Government is offering \$1,000 baby bonuses. But on behalf of all Fiji public, I make this plea to the Minister's on the other side: Please do not turn up at the maternity hospitals with your cheques.

(Laughter)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Leave your Elections smile and your *Fiji Sun* photographers in your office. Please give the new mothers a little peace. Just pray that they vote for you, just pray that they vote for you and as all of these freebies continue, where will the money come from?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The Honourable Minister is obsessed with his debt to GDP ratio. Let us talk, hard numbers instead, Madam Speaker. From Independence until 2006, national debt was over \$2.8 billion. From 2007 until now, debt has risen to almost \$5.169 billion - an increase of almost \$2.3 billion. So in almost 12 years, this Government has borrowed \$2.3 billion and the annual debt repayment in this Budget is about \$635 million, of which about \$332 million is just interest payment.

Every month, every year, every citizen is paying towards more than \$50 million that Government has to repay towards debt and interest. Madam Speaker, \$50 million a month. Think of all the useful things we could be investing in with this money.

Because of our reckless freebie culture, every year the debt gets bigger, not smaller. So much of this money has been wasted but there is so much more capital spending we must still invest in because Government has spent poorly today, there will be less money to invest tomorrow. The Government, Madam Speaker, is spending money like drunks at a nightclub.

(Laughter)

They are having a good time but they will not be feeling the hangover. That will be felt by the ordinary people of Fiji and this mess will be for the rest of us to clean up.

Madam Speaker, there is not one new idea in this Budget speech on how to grow the economy. The Honourable Minister said Fiji had a "business friendly climate, rife with opportunity." He said international financial institutions and credit agencies endorsed this so-called hard facts.

Let us talk about some of the World Bank's hard facts. The Honourable Minister for Industry accused Honourable Chand of being unpatriotic. Madam Speaker, in fact he (pointing at the Minister) is being unpatriotic because he ignores the hard fact by the World Bank and let me give you this.

Every year, the World Bank surveys the ease of doing business of countries in the world. Over 10 years, Fiji's world ranking has fallen dramatically. In 2008, it was 43, now it is 101. For ease of starting a business, the numbers were even worse. In 2008, Fiji ranked 69, now it ranks 160; 160, Madam Speaker. There are only 190 countries in the survey. Fiji scrapes along at the bottom. Number 63 is Yemen and it is in the middle of a civil war!

This is the Government's so-called friendly business climate. The business community cannot tell the Government this because most of them are afraid of this Government.

(Laughter)

For the business community, Madam Speaker, there is fear. There is fear, no freebies. No one is allowed to talk about failures. Madam Speaker, if you own business, people cannot tell you about your failures, Honourable Minister, then please listen to the World Bank. Listen to the World Bank!

Madam Speaker, let us move on to performance. What has been promised in past years and what has been delivered?

In his 2015 Budget speech, the Honourable Minister said and I quote, “Madam Speaker, we expect to divest shares in the Fiji Electricity Authority and Airports Fiji Limited next year”. It is now 2018. What has the Government achieved? It has managed to change the names but that is all. The divestment programme has failed. No private sector partners, no revenue raising to repay debt. In fact, all the Government has done to give away money and it is now handing out free shares in Electricity Fiji Limited (EFL). These shares will pay \$10 a year, probably about \$10 a year in dividends in a good year. More gimmicks! More gimmicks! Perhaps the Honourable Minister thinks that the “E” in EFL stands for “Election”.

What about public service reform? I quote from 2015, and this is what the Honourable Minister said “We are not reluctant to bring in skilled administrators from abroad for these positions. We embrace the idea that doing so will yield the best talent to serve the people”.

What has happened to the people the Government brought in from abroad? There are many examples. The Permanent Secretary for Infrastructure, the Permanent Secretary for Communications, the Chief Executive Officer of the Fiji Roads Authority, the Chief Executive Officer of the LTA, the Chief Executive Officer of the Housing Authority. All have resigned or been driven out. All of them have left, apparently for “family reasons”. So, Madam Speaker – obviously their families matter too!

But once they are out of Fiji, these people have spoken out. They have been dictated to, bullied or made to serve at the whims of politics. They have not been allowed to do their jobs properly and professionally. Because for this Government, Madam Speaker, it is not about doing the work. It is not about families that matter. It is about headlines and TV that matter. As long as the Government looks good, Fijian families do not matter.

In last year’s Budget speech, the Honourable Minister talked about housing. He said and I quote “We are consulting with development partners to partner with the private sector to provide an immediate stockpile of public rental housing”. And here we are, one year later, and we are still waiting. The Government is still talking, now it says, it will partner with Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF). Talk, Madam Speaker, can sometimes be cheap. It will get you a headline but it may not necessarily get Fijian families into houses.

What about the sugar industry? In 2006 before the *coup*, we produced 3.2 million tonnes of cane and over 310,000 tonnes of sugar. Last year, we produced 1.63 million tonnes of cane and 180,388 tonnes of sugar. This was not a decline. It was steady, declining every year since the *coup*.

Government says land leases have been renewed, but the number of active cane growers;

HON. MEMBER.- Ask him?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You were in Government from 2006, fell over from 18,000 to a little over 12,000 under its rule. If this Government is doing everything it can, then why the huge decline

of an industry that until the turn of the century was the mainstay of the economy over 100 years and continues to directly and indirectly support the livelihood of some 200,000 people?

After years of neglect, Madam Speaker, lot of talk, no action, with Elections coming, the Government decided to take some of our ideas.

(Laughter)

But they cannot even copy properly, Madam Speaker. When we said that we need a shock therapy, when we said a minimum granted price of \$100 per tonne will rejuvenate the industry, bring confidence in the industry, the Government provided subsidies for weedicides and pesticides. That is fine, now the Government is talking about a base price and a stabilisation fund and best price is now \$85. That will not do the trick. The trick is, the shock is \$100 per tonne, they can do that now, they may still get some farmers votes in the next Elections, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, Government has allocated \$300,000 to commemorate the 140th Anniversary of the first arrival of indentured Indians from India, which was on 14th May, 1879. We support that, Madam Speaker, and I disagree with all those who level it as a racist allocation. However Madam Speaker, it is too little, too late; having rubbished our proposal in April 2016 to observe a one off public holiday and in a bi-partisan manner organised national celebration to commemorate the arrival of the last batch of Indentured Indians, that was on 11th November, 1916.

Worst of all, Madam Speaker, this Government has for almost 10 years now, despite many repeated requests, unjustly banned Fiji's finest Historian and renowned Academic Professor Dr. Brij Lal and his wife Dr. Padma Narsey Lal from entering Fiji, a descendant of a Girmitya and the foremost authority on the history of Girit and indeed elsewhere, together with his wife have been banished from the land of their birth, which was the instruction was from the Office of the Prime Minister.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I have been a witness to that, Madam Speaker, he does not know.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I talk about it all the time.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I will let him finish his interjection, Madam Speaker.

Finish your interjection!

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Finish your interjection, my friend.

Madam Speaker, we get to the question of a minimum wage. If the economy is growing so fast as we have heard and the self-congratulations from the other side about the economy, why can the lowest people not share in this economic growth?

Last year, the Honourable Minister talked about wages. He said workers on \$3.50 minimum wages were getting \$7 an hour. The prospects for wages he said, were good. But if that is true, why can the Government not increase the minimum wage from \$2.68 per hour? What about the families of the lowest-paid people, do their families matter?

Madam Speaker, the Election is coming, and the NFP is working hard for the Election. Shortly, we will release our Manifesto. It will be focused on housing, education and health.

Madam Speaker, we have announced some of the major policies well in advance because we want to give the people of this country enough time to scrutinise our policies, debate our policies, understand our policies, so we can keep our promise.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Unlike FijiFirst, Madam Speaker, they brought out their Manifesto in the last week of the Election, they promised ‘pie in the sky’, they actually misled the people by saying; “we are going to provide free electricity and water for people”, in fact, it was the subsidy. They promised to keep the zero-VAT on basic food items, Madam Speaker, they put 9 percent VAT on that.

We will not that, Madam Speaker, we will ensure that our policies are understood, debated and looked at carefully before we go into the Election. It will be focused on a decent minimum wage and rebuilding the sugar industry. We will be cutting Ministerial salaries and allowances, we will be cutting out the international conferences and jet-setting. We will keep Ministers at home to focus on making life better for the Fijians.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, I agree with the Honourable Minister, Fijian families do matter, but he and his Government are out of ideas. It is time to change this Government and the climate of fear, freebies and failure. I hope that in this Election, Fijian families will turn out in big numbers, in thousands, and help us out.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.-Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Salote Radrodro to take the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition; I rise to respond to the 2018-2019 Budget Address and now also take this opportunity to thank the Civil Servants for all their good work in putting this Budget Estimates together.

Madam Speaker, at the outset, let me state very clearly to those watching television and those listening to the radio that the truth about this Budget is that this FijiFirst Government do not care about our Fijian families and this Budget drives Fiji further down the road to disaster. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I do not support this Budget.

Madam Speaker, yesterday the SODELPA Party Leader - Mr. Sitiveni Rabuka who is not a sitting member, was being attacked by Government side in their responses. And in all fairness, Madam Speaker, I request the Honourable Prime Minister, to do the honourable thing and invite Mr. Sitiveni Rabuka for a ‘Close Up’ session with *FBC* or a public debate at *USP*.

Madam Speaker, the sugar-coated Budget speech was the usual platter of promises, but as a framework for the way forward, it failed miserably to address any of the major issues facing Fiji today. Like the increase in death rate in NCD-related diseases and suicide, unemployment, crime, especially sex-related where our youths and our children suffer, and the hard drugs that have entered our country, for example, the two recent incidences within a space of one month, valued at about \$60 million.

Madam Speaker, even when the Budget Address pretended to touch on critical issues, the Honourable Minister demonstrated a spectacular misunderstanding of the root causes of these matters and consequently, proposed a number of thoroughly inappropriate remedies.

Madam Speaker, what is more worrying is that this FijiFirst Government has decided to continue stubbornly along their misguided policy direction and determined to do all in their power to convince themselves and others that the nation is not in crisis.

Madam Speaker, I echo Economist, Dr. Neelesh Gounder's words, that this Government since 2012, has failed to collect its forecasted revenue due to projected asset sales that never happened. For example, in 2017-2018 Budget, the Government said that it would collect \$371 million from the sale of Government asset but in reality, it only collected \$0.6 million. This means that the Government reduced its spending by around \$480 million, and ultimately means that promised targets in the Ministries and Departments' Annual Corporate Plan were not achieved and, therefore, adversely affecting service delivery to our Fijian families.

Madam Speaker, a lot has been heard in this august House about RIE or Request to Incur Expenditure. Sadly, the civil servants have always being blamed for work targets not achieved. But the problem is more to do with revenue collection and cash flow, and that is the mandate of the Honourable Minister for Economy. That is why \$2.1 billion or 46 percent of the total Budget of \$4.6 billion is tied down in Head 50 and controlled by the Honourable Minister for Economy. Why is that? The money is only given to Ministries and Departments when the Minister for Economy has enough.

Again, the Honourable Minister for Economy with all the Ministries under his watch, controls about \$3.5 billion or 76 percent of the total \$4.6 billion, and all the other Honourable Ministers sitting on that side, including the Honourable Prime Minister only look after 24 percent or \$1.1 billion. And let me ask the question, are they incapable of looking after their own budgets?

Madam Speaker, the concentration of power with one man and that is, the Honourable Minister for Economy, is scary and everyone in Fiji and all Fijian families must be concerned, because according to Lord Action, 'Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'.

Let me ask our Fijian families watching television and those listening to the radio, do you agree that the Minister for Economy controls 76 percent of our National Budget?

Madam Speaker, this FijiFirst Government has failed our Fijian families. They have failed to deliver, for example, the following as promised in previous Budgets, and now have disappeared altogether from this Budget.

The people of Nasinu are asking, where is the Valelevu Sports Stadium? Where is the Nasinu Swimming Pool? Where is the Waste Transfer Station in the Central Division? And the people of Nabouwalu in Bua are asking about the development of Nabouwalu Town.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, this FijiFirst Government has a passion for catchy sounding phrases, like those plastered on the billboards around the country which bear no resemblance to the policies programmed. They say that all Fijian families matter and they dramatise that by giving out

freebies, but are they free? *E sega*, nothing is free except *na loloma taudua ga nei Jisu e* free. So, all Fijian families must remember that we are paying for those freebies through taxes, like VAT. That means, *na levu ga ni freebies na levu ni tax*, Fijian families will pay.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order! Please, speak in English.

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

HON. SPEAKER.- You will only use vernacular when you are quoting someone. You are not quoting someone so it should be in English.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, that is noted.

And that clearly shows that this FijiFirst Government does not really care about our Fijian families but only care to mislead the people through those vote buying initiatives so to stay in power.

Madam Speaker, today they have not fulfilled or addressed our basic needs, empowered our people or ensured anyone's survival, except for the Government Ministers and it is obvious that we will not be moving onwards after this deceptive and misleading Budget.

Madam Speaker, this Government has already wasted the hard-earned dollars of taxpayers in the past years and failing to accomplish what they promised, for example, they wanted to change the flag. Where is the One Hundred Sands casino development? Where is the Waila City Project? And the Honourable Minister for Economy now comes to Parliament again with another smoke and mirrors' trick in another attempt to hoodwink the people of Fiji.

Madam Speaker, the Minister for Economy has tried to create a rosy picture of this Budget to mislead and deceive our Fijian families but in reality, our people are screaming in pain over crime, over poverty, over high food prices, crisis in the health and education sector, problems with infrastructure, traffic congestion and the loss of business competitiveness; and this Budget does nothing to directly ease the pain.

Madam Speaker, moving on to the Civil Service, I continue to bring up the issue of pay gap between the Permanent Secretaries, as compared to Deputy Permanent Secretaries, the Directors and other Civil Servants. The gap is so huge and it is simply unfair; it is pay discrimination.

The appointment of Permanent Secretaries had seen a string of expatriates suddenly resigning and leaving Fiji or the sudden sacking of others. At the moment, there are three expatriate Permanent Secretaries; two of them are holding two portfolios each. The Permanent Secretary for Civil Service is also the Permanent Secretary for Forestry, and the Permanent Secretary for Education is also the Permanent Secretary for Youth and Sports.

But, Madam Speaker, there are qualified Fijian people to hold these Permanent Secretary positions. Why are they not filled? That shows that they only talk about their Buy Fijian Made Policy, they do not value our own people. They do not care about our own Fiji families.

Madam Speaker, another failure of this Government is the non-submission of Annual Reports from Ministries and Departments. For example, the Ministry of Civil Service has not submitted any since its establishment in 2015. The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation from 2014.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Speaker, when the Honourable Niumataiwalu was talking about families and he tied this very closely to the Budget, you asked him to stop speaking because it is outside of the Budget. Here, we have the Honourable Radrodro ranting on and on about a whole lot of things that are not related at all to this Budget, so I think the same decision that was made with regard to the case of Honourable Niumataiwalu should also be applied to this ranting and raving that we have to sit here and listen to.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, you are referring to the content of the speech which does not qualify under the Point of Order and what she is reading really is linking to the Budget.

Honourable Radrodro, would you like to continue?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Honourable Minister for Employment, it is about Permanent Secretaries' salaries and to the Budget.

Madam Speaker, this FijiFirst Government continues to flaunt the Budget promises from 2015 until this one, but they have failed to inform the members of public on the performance of the Budget through the Annual Reports.

Madam Speaker, just like the Budget booklets that have been distributed by the Government through the *Fiji Sun*, likewise through the same channel the Annual Reports must be tabled in this House and distributed to the public so that they can see or know whether the promises made by Government in the Budget have been achieved or not. And if not, the reasons for non-achievement and what happened to the budgetary provisions. Otherwise, Madam Speaker, it is just a one-sided affair. They only talk about the Budget, they do not talk about the performance of that Budget through the documentation of the Annual Report.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- So, Madam Speaker, the inability of respective Ministers and Permanent Secretaries to table their Annual Reports not only reflects their poor performance but also lack the accountability, transparency and the lack of overall good governance practice by this Government.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, civil servants operate in a culture of fear of victimisation. They are demoralised and frustrated because of nepotism, cronyism and unfair treatment. For example, the latest case of victimisation is Mr. Jack Komaitai of the Military, who had been forced to resign. Madam Speaker, we in SODELPA care about our civil servants' family and we will review their contractual work agreement and remain local with the Permanent Secretaries appointments.

Moving onto the Department of Women, Madam Speaker, the Department is only allocated \$7.39 million and out of that, we note \$2.5 million has been allocated for the construction of Barefoot College, leaving a balance of only about \$5 million towards the overall development and empowerment of women, especially the marginalised and those in rural and maritime communities.

Madam Speaker, women make up almost 50 percent of the 360,000 people living in poverty. And let me ask those women who may be watching TV or listening to the radio; do you want this \$2.5 million Barefoot College or would you rather have that \$2.5 million used to increase financial assistance for small business development to secure markets so that women do not return home with unsold products after the three days Women's Expo?

SODELPA will also look at the legislative framework to support and promote the increasing of women's participation in politics and other levels of leadership and decision making through temporary special measure. That is when we will be sitting on that side of the House very soon.

Madam Speaker, on the protection of our children, laws have been passed but these laws have not been implemented effectively and our children continue to be raped, our children are continue to be murdered and abused. The entire Government should hang its head in shame over the callous disregard of our nation's young.

Moving onto constituency issues, Madam Speaker, towards Poverty Alleviation. The FijiFirst Government does not care about our Fijian families particularly those who are living on or below the poverty line. And that is about 40 percent of our population or 360,000 people. For example, clean and reliable water supply is still a major problem in our rural and maritime communities. For instance, the Ministry of Education assists primary schools through the WASH programme in the construction of flush toilet facilities but the lack of proper and reliable water supply makes them useless and sanitation problems and health risk continues.

Madam Speaker, \$300,000 has been allocated for the WASH programme, \$277,075 for the provision of water tanks and yet \$3.1 million is allocated for free milk. Madam Speaker, how true the *Bible* verse in Matthew 6.21 and I quote; "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." So does this FijiFirst Government really treasure our children or they treasure the company that is supplying the free milk?

Madam Speaker, the SODELPA Government will exercise prudent financial management and invest that \$3.1 million into water tanks towards Sustainable Development Goal 6 for Clean Water and Sanitation in primary schools. For example, Avea District School and Cikobia Primary School in Vanuabalavu still suffer with no water.

Madam Speaker, people are still without electricity and power supply. For example, our Melanesian families just here in Namara, Khalsa Road and also those who were affected by *TC Winston* in Vanuabalavu, Tailevu, Ra, they are still waiting for electricity. And even the power supply system in Nabouwalu and that includes the hospital and the Government Station experience intermittent supply due to daily shutdown from 12 midday to 2 o'clock.

Madam Speaker, there is an allocation of \$18.34 million under Head 50 SEGs 5 and 8 for Public Service Broadcast TV and Radio. And also there is allocation for new Office Complex for the Office of the Prime Minister. Madam Speaker, are these necessary expenditures or can that money be diverted for electricity and power supply to the marginalised group. The SODELPA Government will redirect and use that kind of allocation to light up our needy Fijian families. The new Office for the Prime Minister can wait, anyway he is always away overseas most of the time.

(Laughter)

And taxpayers continue to support FBC. Madam Speaker, if FBC is not financially healthy then do the right thing, change its leadership.

(Laughter)

As for the roads, Madam Speaker, is there any new road being built by this Government? Their focus has just been on road repairs and maintenance works in selective visible locations especially in urban centres which is causing more and more traffic jams apart from the very obvious to can I say again, *vesumona* the people.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- But they ignore the connecting side roads which lead to our urban poorer communities, for example in Caubati Village, Tacirua, Kalabu, Khlasa Road and other informal communities where the roads are not even tarsealed and the pot holes are just as wide as the road. And the same goes for our rural and maritime communities.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Go and check. That means you are not going to the constituency.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- I think you are lying.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, the continuous road and maintenance work also raises a lot of concerns and questions on the issue of quality and standards of materials used and also on the workmanship. For example, the traffic lights in Vesida was damaged during the road repair works in that area and until to-date, Madam Speaker, it is not being repaired and it has caused accidents and even deaths. Go and check, Honourable Minister.

Madam Speaker, on Health, it is a relief that the International Golf Tournament has been removed from this budget but from 2015 until 2017-2018, the Government had been irresponsible and allocated a total of \$39 million to International Golf Tournament whilst the extension and repair of the CWM Maternity Unit was only given \$8 million. And what is more alarming is that the Government has come up with this bad policy initiative in encouraging women to have children and enticing them with \$500 after child is registered and the other \$500 when the child enters class one.

And let me ask the Minister for Economy, did this policy initiative come from your Budget Consultation or from the Ministry of Women? Madam Speaker, Fiji is not faced with a population crisis. Fiji is faced with a health crisis. CWM Maternity Unit is struggling to meet the demand due to lack of beds and other vital resources. And this type of policy will only bring in more hardship and really goes to show that this FijiFirst Government does not care about our Fijian families.

Madam Speaker, the Makoi Maternity Unit is now been completed but it is not operating in a far as birthing is concerned and we ask why? The Honourable Minister is not here, but maybe there are a lack of midwives.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion let me say this to the FijiFirst Government, do not tell us here that you value Fijian families, your budget speaks volume of what you value and the fact that the huge amount of \$2.1 billion which is about 46 percent sitting under RIE shows that there is internal control in there to affect the achievement of the targets of Ministries and Departments.

Madam Speaker, before I take my seat, I take this time to express and acknowledge your good self, Madam Speaker and the Secretariat for the good work that has been done as far as Members of Parliament are concerned. And also to the Leader of the Opposition and the caucus from both sides of the House, we have enjoyed our work together in getting things done for the people. Also I would like to take time to thank my voters all and around Fiji and I hope and trust that I have been a good representative and to the value of your vote and we also look forward that there would be more would-be voters in the future. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Minister for Waterways to have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Honourable Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members of Parliament. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the 2018-2019 National Budget and specifically to deliver my response on our Ministry's allocation. But before that let me make some observations on the response so far made in this House by Opposition Members.

Madam Speaker, you would have noted that the Opposition has really not converged on what is their main issue with regard to the Budget. I see four common thread emerging so far from their contributions.

The first one, they failed to understand that the Budget is an expenditure bundle put together which best meets the vision of the Government. There can be various expenditure bundles and this is one expenditure bundle. Our Government wants to build capacity of the economy, develop the productive base of the economy so that the current and future generations of Fijians can have improved livelihood. At the same time, we also want to bend backwards and assist those who are poor, vulnerable and marginalised to be part of the growing economy so that they can benefit from the returns of the growing economy.

Madam Speaker, it is about what is the best expenditure bundle that will help us achieve these two main objectives. Madam Speaker, have you heard any one of the Opposition providing an alternative expenditure bundle? From yesterday until now, not a single Member of the Opposition in their contribution offered an alternative expenditure bundle. They were all over saying this and that, et cetera, none of us from this side heard an alternative bundle proposed from that side.

Madam Speaker, the second common thread I note from them is to throw absolute numbers to create alarm and anxiety amongst the rank and file. Madam Speaker, numbers in its absolute sense may not mean anything. For example, a debt level of \$4.5 billion may have no meaning unless you examine it against the earning capacity of the economy. For example, you will go and say to someone, let us say, a garment worker, "look, the \$5,000 debt that you have is very high for a garment worker." But if you go to a businessman with a \$10 million turnover, you cannot say that the \$5,000 debt level is very high to the businessman. So Madam Speaker, whenever one looks at a figure in absolute sense, it may not matter, when one talks about the debt of an economy, one looks at the earning capacity of the economy.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, even when you look at our debt to GDP ratio of 47 percent, what it actually means is that for every dollar of the national income, we will spend 47 cents to liquidate the debt. Members on the other side who have seen countries having 110 percent debt to GDP ratio, 100 percent debt to GDP ratio.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Some of the failed African states.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Absolutely. And here we have got 47 percent. International benchmark for sound fiscal policy is 40 to 50 percent.

Madam Speaker, the third common thread we would have noted throughout is this new thing that they are talking about which is this 'R'. Madam Speaker, they fail to realise that this 'R' is about capital purchases and capital works.

Madam Speaker, the allocation under 'R' has nothing to do with Minister for Economy or the line Ministers, it is between the Permanent Secretaries of the line Ministry and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Economy. So the allocations under 'R' ...

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- They are not even aware of the Requisition.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Because we are dealing with this (R), you are not, you do not know.

HON. MEMBER.- You never will.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, please, let us hear the Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, so the allocations under (R) are transactions raised between the two Permanent Secretaries. The Opposition must also understand that the overall growth of the economy rests with the Ministry of Economy so it is the final vetting agency to ensure that Capital Works Expenditure which is under (R), in requisition, are in line with the Financial Management Manual and will deliver the best for the Fijian economy and the country and the line Ministry.

HON. MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- So, Madam Speaker, that is why whenever we go for tender, et cetera, there are various sets of eyes in the form of committees who vets the submissions, Madam Speaker, so someone might pick some anomalies somewhere, Madam Speaker. We are dealing with taxpayers' money, capital purchases and capital grant to outside people.

Madam Speaker, the last issue that I wish to note are comments which are based on vested interest from the Members of the Opposition, let me just give one example, Madam Speaker.

Yesterday, the Honourable Nawaikula tried his best to argue why we are providing increased funding to the sugar industry. We need to put this into perspective, Madam Speaker. Why is he saying that? He is saying that because we are reviving an industry that he tried his best to kill, so he is the one, Madam Speaker, who tried his best to kill the industry and now we are reviving it, so he is questioning why we are funding the Fiji sugar industry so you can see his vested interest in the industry, Madam Speaker.

If he gets time I am sure he would have gone towards Wainikoro, Kelikoso, Lagalaga, you will see, Madam Speaker, vast tracks of land with overgrown bush. Before it used to be under sugarcane, Madam Speaker, what you can see is overgrown bush with Honourable Nawaikula's face on it, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, if you go to Malomalo, Sigatoka Backroad, you will see empty houses, empty shops which used to be very vibrant shops, vast tracks of land lying idle under overgrown bush, Madam Speaker, that is the stamp of Honourable Nawaikula in collaboration with Mr. Qarikau. They killed the industry and they are now feeling the pain when we are trying to revive the industry.

Madam Speaker, I applaud the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister for Economy for empowering all Fijian families through the 2018-2019 Budget. Successful economic development starts with decisions made within families and households, improving education, the skills of the population and investment in human capital is a central factor in development and this Budget provides those precursors for human development.

Madam Speaker, Waterways and Environment have cultural spiritual values to many people in Fiji. Important customs and spiritual beliefs in Fijian communities are embedded in our Waterways and Environment. Furthermore, Waterways and Environment are linked to important sources of food, recreation and income and such are integral to our way of life and as such, it is timely that we consolidate their thoughts to safeguard our environment and Waterways.

Madam Speaker, I applaud the vision of the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister for Economy in identifying the synergies between the Waterways Management and the preservation of Fiji's natural environment. As such, the formulation of the Ministry of Waterways and Environment is timely and reflects good governance. The Ministry of Waterways and Environment is first for the region and one of the few in the small island developing states and one of the few in the world.

Madam Speaker, the formulation of the Ministry of Waterways and Environment reflects Government's vision to manage our water resources and safeguard our environment through an integrated pragmatic approach. The Ministry of Waterways and Environment should be committed to providing all Fijians with the quality living environment, pristine ecosystems and mitigate socio-economic impacts of floods and coastal erosion. The provision for drainage planning, flooding, managing flood risk, mitigating floods, managing water resource achieving environment sustainability shall be the essence of the Ministry. The Ministry shall achieve the above through innovation, integrity, equity respect on viable partnerships.

Madam Speaker, given our geographical location, we are faced with increased exposure to extreme events of climate change such as sea level rise, cyclones and floods thus calling for more resilience building works. Madam Speaker, memories of the devastation caused by *Cyclone Winston* are still with us and we are still coming to terms with the recent flooding caused by excessive rainfall and *Cyclone Josie*.

Madam Speaker, as I speak, millions of people in Japan are being evacuated from their homes due to major flooding in their area. Let me quote from a news article on *BBC* posted last Sunday titled: "Japan Floods - Extreme danger with record rainfall" and I quote:

"Parts of Western Japan hit by deadly floods and landslides are facing unprecedented danger as more downpours are expected" officials warn. "We have never experienced this kind of rain before", a weather official said.

More than 60 people are dead and dozens missing after record rainfall caused rivers to bust their banks in Hiroshima and other areas. Two million people have been ordered to evacuate. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said "Rescuers were working against time. There are still many people missing and others in need of help," the Prime Minister told reporters on Sunday. Since Thursday parts of Western Japan have received three times the usual rainfall for the whole of July setting off floods and landslides. An official at the Japanese Meteorological Agency told a news conference, "This is a situation of extreme danger."

Madam Speaker as of today, 100 people have been noted to have lost lives in this flood in Japan that took place last weekend.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Waterways performed during last year's Budget announcement to improve waterways and provide flood protection to Fijian communities, a threat that is projected to deteriorate due to the effects of climate change. As such, consolidating the efforts of Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Waterways into one provides a strategic platform to deliver our services and streamlines Government's ability to direct environmental funding and support the nation's flood adaptation and resilience efforts.

Madam Speaker, the total budgetary allocation for the Ministry of Waterways and Environment is \$69.9 million for the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year. Madam Speaker, \$14.2 million is allocated for environmental protection initiatives illustrating the resolute commitment of Government to ensure that no development in Fiji comes at the cost of overall health of our natural environment.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, \$55.7 million is allocated to Waterways. This will fund the Policy and Administration Programme, Waterways Services Programme, including capital projects that will be undertaken in 2018-2019 Fiscal Year.

Madam Speaker, water and waterways are strategic issues and as such of great national importance. Our tremendous efforts in the current year have improved the situation to some extent but we are nowhere near to where we want to be. We have spent all efforts to address the problem downstream all these years and minimal to manage the risk upstream, the watersheds.

Madam Speaker, it is our watershed and catchments where we need to put all our efforts moving forward, a key strategic direction the Ministry will align to moving forward.

Environmental degradation and deteriorating waterways pose fundamental challenges to sustainable development and security of our Fijian families. Socioeconomic advances cannot be sustained without clean air to breathe, safe water to drink, healthy soils for crops and livestock production and a clean and stable environment to support work and life. As such the Ministry will ensure that environment is safeguarded while we are as a nation pursue economic development and provide security to our families.

Madam Speaker, in a world facing severe challenges to the environment and water resource availability, consolidation of the efforts of the two ministries presents opportune time to formulate policies aimed to sustainably manage our natural resources.

Madam Speaker, Waterways in Fiji have intrinsic environmental and ecological value and also provide a wide range of ecological systems. Ecosystem services result from a waterway's hydrology, landforms, vegetation, fauna and micro-organisms, which function together as an ecosystem to provide beneficial outcomes for the people and other ecosystems. It is therefore important that we explore initiatives like payment for ecosystem services to achieve sustainable development and management of nation's water resource for economy-wide benefits.

Madam Speaker, solutions like hard engineering structures are no longer adequate to protect us from fluvial flooding and coastal storm surges. The hard engineering structures require enormous investments and regular maintenance. As such, we need to explore options to include nature-based solutions to our current problem.

Madam Speaker, implementation of nature-based interventions to mitigate floods, erosions and catchment management is on the rise. There is a lot to say in support of nature-based solutions. They are generally low carbon, sustainable and environmentally friendly and they deliver additional co-benefits. As such, the Ministry will include options for nature, ecosystem-based mitigation strategies moving forward and work on this has already begun.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry has re-assessed its activities and structure and service delivery for 2018-2019 Fiscal Year will be through three thematic programmes:

1. Policy and Administration;
2. Waterways Services; and
3. Environment.

Madam Speaker, the Policy and Administration Programme provides policy and technical advice based on applied scientific research and analytic methods in waterways management through objective research-based information in the development, implementation and evaluation of waterways and water management-related policies and issues in Fiji. A total of \$1.5 million is allocated to Policy and Administration Programme to carry its activities.

Madam Speaker, Waterways Services Programme carries out all the operational activities at the Ministry, hence it is the core of the Ministry. All of the capital projects are administered and carried out through this Programme and includes implementation of irrigation, drainage and flood protection. Madam Speaker, as such \$55.7 million is allocated for Waterways Services Programme.

Madam Speaker, \$47.4 million of the above allocation is allocated for capital works which means 85 percent of the total allocation for this component is for capital works. This reflects the nature of the works we will carry out at the Ministry; 67 percent of the total allocation will be used for capital projects focusing on mitigating flooding, developing more-effective flood management strategies, waterway dredging, river embankment and coastal management.

Madam Speaker, for the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year, the Waterways Service Programmes will implement technical and engineering measures addressing drainage and flood protection, smart agricultural irrigation solutions, waterway dredging and river embankment and coastal management activities. As such, Madam Speaker, the above activities will be provided through the following programmes:

1. Maintenance of Irrigation Schemes Programmes;
2. Maintenance of Drainage - through the Municipal Council Programmes;
3. Drainage and Flood Protection Programme;
4. Watershed Management Programme;
5. Maintenance of Drainage Systems for Non-Municipal Areas Programme;
6. Coastal Erosion Protection Programmes;
7. Irrigation Support for Farm Development;
8. Drainage for Farmlands Programme; and
9. Drainage for Rural Residential and Areas Programme.

Madam Speaker, the last four of the above were formulated to ensure adequate drainage, coastal protection, and irrigation support to all Fijian families through the provision of effective flood management system, introduction of smart agricultural technology solutions for seasonal farmers and waterway dredging, river bank and coastal management activities.

Madam Speaker, for the Coastal Protection Works, we have got an allocation of \$14 million. This Programme is proposed to improve the coastal resilience of coastal communities and families to the impact of climate change, induced coastal erosion, storm surge and coastal flooding. The activities covered in the coastal protection programme comprise of implementing structural and non-structural measures for vulnerable families and communities.

Madam Speaker, a total of 34 coastal protection activities have been identified for the next fiscal year. These include 19 in the Central Division (including the Provinces of Namosi, Rewa and Tailevu); 8 in the Northern Division (in the Provinces of Bua, Macuata and Cakaudrove); 4 in the Eastern Division (Kadavu and Lomaiviti); 3 in the Western Division (Nadroga, Ba and Ra).

Madam Speaker, Irrigation Support for Farm Development has got an allocation of \$2.5 million. We have also been given an allocation of \$3 million to undertake drainage of farm lands, both sugar and

non-sugar. So, for the first time ever, Madam Speaker, we will undertake drainage work in non-sugar farms which is non-sugar cash crop.

Madam Speaker, for the first time we also have an allocation of \$3 million to undertake drainage work for rural residential areas (include villages and settlements). The number of villages close to the rivers and coastal areas require drainage work, Madam Speaker, and our government has now decided to address this issue in the coming financial year for the \$3 million allocation.

Madam Speaker, we also have a \$14.4 million allocation to undertake river dredging work. This includes Sigatoka River Dredging Phase 3, Labasa River Maintenance and Dredging Works; Rewa River and the Tributaries; Penang River Dredging Work.

Madam Speaker, River Bank Protection Work will be undertaken at Mataniqara bank, Savu Village bank, Nakaile Village, Court House bank protection in Labasa, Wainiwaqa River and Wainibuabua River in Wainadoi.

Madam Speaker, the Coastal Embankment and Protection Works include Navolau Village, Rukuruku Village, Namoli Village, Bau Island, Nasilai Village, Vatani Village, Nauouo Village, Sasa Village and Nakawaga Village.

Madam Speaker, we are looking for a very exciting area. We have got an allocation of \$1.9 million to also undertake maintenance of irrigation schemes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, with those works, we look forward to reaching our families and secure them in the coming year and I wish all our Fijian families all the best. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you very much, Honourable Members, for your input, your debates so far. We will now adjourn our proceedings for lunch and we will again resume at 2 o'clock.

Thank you, Honourable Members.

The Parliament adjourned at 1.06 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.02 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members, you may be seated. I now call upon the Honourable Netani Rika to have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Allow me to thank you for the best wishes and the birthday card and cake as well accorded to me this morning, and I relay this appreciation along with my family. Best wishes to Parliament and all the Honourable Members of this august House.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers, the Leader of Opposition, Honourable Members of Parliament.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Appropriation Bill of 2018-2019 and would also like to make a short contribution to the National Budget debate. However, I will be using few illustrations to put across my points.

Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his unwavering leadership and I would also like to congratulate the Honourable Minister for Economy and his robust team for the sacrifice and commitment in putting together the 2018-2019 National Budget.

Madam Speaker, using the family as the base of the 2018-2019 National Budget is a very smart decision because the family is always viewed by many as the most important institution and the basic unit of the social structure as well as the most important agent of socialisation. Families in many sense could be compared to the cells that make up the human body. If these cells are under-nourished or become cancerous, the entire body will not function as it should be. The disintegration of a society is largely the outcome of the breakdown of families. Families to a large extent would be more a liability rather than an asset.

Madam Speaker, it is therefore crucial to provide all Fiji families the much needed scaffold so they could bounce back in their life's journey and that is the whole purpose of this family budget.

Madam Speaker, on the Social Service Sector 2018-2019 Budget Kit Cover, it has the theme that reads, "Uplifting families, uplifting Fiji." What a great theme. At one glance to any lay person or to me also as a Christian and as a person, it means so much. Leave everything aside; the theme is loaded with positivity, despite the odds, the essence of which is basically planting hope once again into all the Fiji families. The *Holy Bible* tells us that we must work by faith not by sight and also to call into being what is not.

For these reasons this Budget is really special because it carries the family in its Heart, just as God carries each one of us in His Heart. One thing we must remember that God works in mysterious ways and also His ways are not ours.

If He caused this Budget, which I strongly believe in the eyes of faith, He will surely bring it to pass. Madam Speaker, families matter to Government and more so, matters to God as well. As expected, there are both positive and negative vibes towards the 2018-2018 National Budget but my advice to everyone out there is that do not thrive on hearsay, or lies, but to put their faith in God and do what they need to do. Pray and seek God's face. When we do that, God will do the rest.

Madam Speaker, the universal lesson that we need to understand is that when we confess negativity in everything we say, negative manifest itself and vice-versa. Words are very important, therefore we need to watch what we say. Madam Speaker, a classic example is how the people of Tebara Delta greet each other in their own dialect and I will quote in the Tebara dialect: "*Gonei, drau bula*

vinaka, drau qai tiko evei?” “*Qai kenai sau mai, Warai.*” If I translate this greeting in English, it would be something similar to this. The first person greeting the second person by saying: “Hi! How are you this morning and where are you heading to?” The second person’s response would be immediately saying: *Warai*, meaning “No” or “I do not know.”

The response, *warai*, it can be said in two ways. First, it can be a snap short and quick one, “*warai*”, or a long dragging “*warai*”. The quick response literally means “no” whilst the dragging long “*warai*” literally means “yes”. But it is all expressed “no or I do not know”. You do not have to be a speech therapist to make this out. When it is a long dragging “*warai*”, it means “yes.”

Madam Speaker, that is pretty normal from the Tebara people. They say “no” but they means “yes”.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, I reiterate what the Honourable Prime Minister said yesterday in regards to every good initiative introduced by Government for the benefit of the disadvantaged people of Fiji. It is always seen by the opposite side of the House, as handout, freebies and vote buying, party propaganda and the list goes on.

Their response will always be negative even though when they mean ‘yes’ in their hearts. Let me ask, are we really caring for all Fiji families in our hearts? Are we trusting God enough or do we have that needed faith for God to turn things around?

Madam Speaker, they may say whatever they want to say, it will not change the truth and the genuine spirit that is in built in these initiatives and I certainly believe only the truth will set them free. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, it is very important eventually set Fiji families from all negativities and in so doing, bring the restoration of all positivities. Madam Speaker, the Government has done its utmost best to provide good initiative for the people of Fiji that is by Ministry of Development, raising our standard of living, provide access to better education, better health service, new initiatives with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, infrastructure, transportation, water and electricity, and the list goes on.

Madam Speaker, Fiji has experienced nine consecutive years of economic growth and this is the end result of commitment, hardworking and good planning by the Honourable Minister for Economy and his dynamic team and I commend them for that.

Madam Speaker, it is the mandate of this Government to provide a National Budget annually and ensure everything are in order for the wellbeing of the whole nation. Naturally, the mandate of the other side of the House is to critically analyse Government activities, meaning smoothen the edges and advice accordingly for the benefit of the whole nation and its people.

Madam Speaker, this reminds me of the Public Employees Union Logo that says and I quote, “United We Stand Divided We Fall”. The theme of family always unity achieved through working together and supporting each other as God wills.

Madam Speaker, we all have our responsibilities. The Government has provided many initiatives for the people to enjoy. I will use the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Budget highlights an example that says, “the Ministry provide a Social Safety Net that empowers disadvantage Fijian, thus, creating a level playing field in our society”.

It provides initiative and to break down barriers of gender, disability, age and economic standing by allowing all the disadvantaged Fijians to fully participate in society in order for them to also benefit from the nation growing prosperity. Madam Speaker, this is a great initiative that the growing prosperity of the nations is being shared amongst all the people, including the disadvantage people of our society. Madam Speaker, if a well-known economist after a thorough analysis of the Budget and confirm that this Budget is a friendly budget who are we the five-eighth economist to say otherwise.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, even the Rt. Honourable Peter O'Neil, the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea acknowledge the rapid development Fiji has achieved during his address to Parliament yesterday. Why do we have to deny the truth? Why say 'no' when you mean 'yes'?

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, let me conclude, I fully support the Budget and I thank you for your indulgence. I plead, we rise to once again plant the seed of hope in all Fijian families and may God bless Fiji. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni to take the floor.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Minister for Economy who is not here, may I honour the Shadow Minister for Economy, Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament and those sitting in the gallery watching the proceedings; Madam Speaker, I wish to press home again a theme from my maiden speech that is very relevant for this debate to tell the Fijian families the truth because we, the Opposition, care based on data, research to support process, policy, regulations, law, justice, strategies, mission and vision.

One of the questions I raised was about the very strange saga over the 2017 Census. That Census has great relevance for this Budget through the Bureau of Statistics and for every budget. I am particularly interested in the statistics on ethnic breakdowns. The story that concerns me began with a perfectly sensible question in this House by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition on census ethnicity data, Madam Speaker.

This triggered a disturbing rant from the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, alleging that the Opposition was obsessed with ethnicity. The Honourable Minister said we needed to move away from this. There had been no aggregation of data based on ethnicity. He added that as there had been no collection of data, how could the Government release it?

The Bureau of Statistics confirmed that data on ethnicity had been collected, but it would only be released if instructed to do so from unnamed higher authority, Madam Speaker. The Bureau later said that ethnic data was flawed. This is a very odd and tangled story, but one thing is certain, there is absolute determination to withhold ethnic statistics and information from the people of Fiji.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Listen and you will learn. This is my *veitavioka* so listen.

I remind the Honourable Minister that the people, the families of Fiji, paid for the Census. It costs \$14.5 million, Madam Speaker, according to the 2018-2019 Budget documentation.

The Bureau of Statistics which conducted the census is a public office. It is, therefore, the Constitutional right of any Fiji citizen to be given that document, along with its flaws. I would like to find out how the flaws occurred, as a researcher. This raises questions about the professionalism of the Bureau, Madam Speaker.

I must say, Madam Speaker, that never in Fiji's modern history has there been an attempt like this to withhold census information from the people. The Minister is a politician gripped by an obsession. That obsession is to somehow remove ethnicity from the social map of our nation. He cannot do it.

Fiji is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. This pluralism is our defining characteristics. The Honourable Minister needs to understand that people everywhere are quite rightly proud of their ethnicity and origins, their ancestry, their customs, their spiritual beliefs and traditions.

It is normal practice in a diverse society, such as ours to collect and release the information that reflects our character and makeup. This is crucial for adapting planning and development to the specific needs of the ethnic groups, Madam Speaker. This is not a hard thing to understand, for example, diabetes, that scourge is raging through our society, affects some people of a certain ethnicity more than others. I know, I come from the

It is obvious that the health services must have this information to study the ethnic trends and what action should be taken to address these. It is dangerous and irresponsible to deny health professionals the data they require. Business people, Madam Speaker, need ethnic data to assist with their business planning. I know about this firsthand experience. An investor ignoring this in a very diverse society is at high risk to fail.

The truth is that, different ethnic groups have different tastes, values, attitudes and preferences, some of them related to culture and religion, Madam Speaker. An understanding of these is critical for managing the affairs of our country and its future as a diverse society.

I should point out that the Honourable Minister has boxed himself in with his intolerant and angry insistence of no ethnicity. He is caught because the Constitution he principally authored has important ethnic references. He recognises the unique cultural customs, traditions and language, Madam Speaker, of the descendants of the indentured labourers, the descendants of the settlers and immigrants and the indigenous peoples of Rotuma and Fiji. That, he has said.

Why did he include these ethnicities in this Constitution if he now wants to ban specific reference to them from public life, Madam Speaker? The Honourable Minister is very confused.

I make a few more points on this topic. The indigenous community of Fiji is a very small and distinct group in this planet. It is very natural that its members wish to preserve their ethnicity, their identity, customs, culture and language – a language that is banned in this House and I believe a few words said to today was good to hear. They have no wish, Madam Speaker, to follow the path of so many other distinct indigenous peoples, who struggle to survive and avoid extinction.

It is therefore very, very disturbing that the Honourable Minister wishes to prevent us from finding out how many of us there are, at this point in our history, as tallied in the census. It is astounding that he cannot understand this. It reflects Madam Speaker, the depth of his own obsession. I will be very happy to discuss this with him, in the spirit of *talanoa*.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, a point of order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of order.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Point of order, Madam Speaker, on relevance. This is basically a budget discussion. She is talking on ethnicity and our original ancestors, so it does not have any relevance on the Budget discussion as we are doing now, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Member is talking about the budget that was allocated for the conduct of the census and yet, the census to her in her opinion has not produced the results.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In the spirit of *talanoa*, I am willing to spend time with him. I will explain to him that he should not confuse ethnicity and race with racism, and that is something that you people should easily do.

Recently, Madam Speaker, I read in an article about a marvellous lady, Ms. Venina Cirivesi, who celebrated her 102nd birthday at a Senior Citizens Home. I was struck by the comment of one of the guests, the Honourable Minister for Women, Children & Poverty Alleviation, Mereseini Vuniwaqa. The Honourable Minister spoke of the differences in ethnicities. This had not stopped the inhabitants from counting each other as family.

That is exactly the point; this country of such great and colourful diversity and ethnicity is one family. Its people have one home, Fiji. We should all work hard to make our national identity stronger, more united, free and truthful, not fearful and neutral. The Honourable Minister for Economy could learn something from the Honourable Mereseini Vuniwaqa.

I noted that the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Hon. Peter O'Neill, commented on our Micronesian ethnic relationship as allies yesterday. This is a common bond in the new economic order and value chain to grow the service industry in the Pacific region. Our ethnicity is our strength, not our weakness.

I turn briefly now, Madam Speaker, to the Government's claim about high levels of private investment. ANZ International Economist, Dr. Kishti Sen, is on record recently as describing investment from the private sector in Fiji as weak. This directly contradicts the Government position portraying an investment boom, Madam Speaker.

The failure to make Fiji sufficiently appealing to private capital is reflected in this Government's very poor rating in the World Bank's index for ease of doing business. The SDL Government scored a much higher rating of 34 out of 155 countries.

In his budget speech, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister indicated that his Government had create hundreds and thousands of new jobs. Madam Speaker, how can that be, when according to the ANZ, private investment is weak. Of course, the ANZ Bank is in a position to know. Would the Honourable Minister like to spell out precisely where these hundreds of thousands of new jobs are? What kind of jobs are they? The many thousands of people who are unemployed do not see it.

This Government is fond of praising the FNPF as being a great success, Madam Speaker, and I note plans announced in the Budget for the FNF to develop housing units. The FNPF Board sees the Fund as very strong and so does the Honourable Minister and the Prime Minister.

But tragic and bitter truth is that while the Fund may have a good balance sheet, making it the largest financial institution in Fiji, Madam Speaker, most members are headed for a retirement of poverty. The figures show that 73 percent of the members had amounts in their accounts of less than \$10,000. This is far below what is required for a pension suited for the Honourable Minister's modern nation State.

Some calculations I have seen, indicate a pension of \$18.12 weekly for this 73 percent of fund for members with low balances. That is a shocking statistic, Madam Speaker. It is an indictment of the failure of the current Board members. Failure is the right word, failure with the capital F, Madam Speaker.

They should resign. I am sure a SODELPA government will immediately call for an inquiry into how this mess was allowed to happen. An inquiry is required also into the circumstances in which several pensioners illegally lost up to half of their supposedly irrevocable pensions during the period of the Military Government, Madam Speaker.

Obviously, while the FNPF directors were busy building the strength of FNPF's finances in more recent times, they were not keeping watch over the interests of people the Fund was set up to serve, Madam Speaker. A prudent Board would have been more aware of the deteriorating situation of majority of the members' funds and acted to protect them, Madam Speaker.

I praise the FNPF's current CEO, Mr. Jaoji Koroi, for talking openly about the crisis, Madam Speaker. He has pinpointed the main problem as policies that allowed members to withdraw too much from their accounts. This, he did publically and I honour him for doing that.

This side of the House notes that the Government had been quick to encourage withdrawals at times of natural disasters. I remember the Honourable Prime Minister early this year making a comment along the lines of how important it was for those needing flood assistance to be able to quickly draw on their FNPF accounts.

After *TC Winston*, Madam Speaker, members were free to take out amounts totalling millions of dollars. This was a way of stimulating the economy and suited the Government. But it left those who took money out with much reduced funds for their retirements, they were used. All these will have to change under a SODELPA government.

I make the point that FNPF's strong balance sheet is very helpful to the Government for its local borrowing. I understand those borrowings, Madam Speaker, at the moment stood at \$5.1 billion as reflected in Page 5 of the Supplement to the Budget, plus contingency liability \$1 billion or total of \$6.1 billion.

Imagine, Madam Speaker, from a risk management scenario, if we had a *TC-Winston*-type hit the West now, the incoming hurricane bad debt will exponentially balloon and will take generations to repay, not to mention the impact on the pensioners' poverty status, Madam Speaker. Perhaps, the FijiFirst Party's insurance scheme will come to the rescue.

If I could just mention here the RIE, Madam Speaker, I will try to summarise this, 76 percent is controlled by the Honourable Minister for Economy and that is too much power for one person. You should empowered to manage your own budget. Madam Speaker, it is wrong from management point of view for one person to have too much power.

I will leave the last part of my remarks, Madam Speaker, for climate change and the *Talanoa* policy. The Honourable Prime Minister is following as President of COP 23 and which the Honourable Minister mentioned in the Budget.

Talanoa as we all know is our relaxed and informal way of discussion to solve problems and disagreements, and reach reciprocity and consensus, Madam Speaker. Unfortunately, his *Talanoa* sessions have not yet brought about a world consensus on the crucial climate change target of 1.5 degrees centigrade for global warming. A statement from a recent Polynesian Leader's Group Summit stressed

the limiting warming to 1.5 degrees centigrade is a matter of survival for Small Island Developing States like ours. So I say to the Honourable Prime Minister, get on with it. Justify your approximately \$900 a day salary and \$3,000 overseas allowance and show us what you can do as a negotiator.

Perhaps, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister would like to tell this House and the people what he has earned. So far his COP 23 meetings and travel. His *talanoa* technique has not been good enough to heal a disagreement with Ambassador Nazhat Shameem. He had to sack her, so much for SDG 5 on gender equality and addressing the “glass ceiling”. Her replacement was recently transferred, so who is our Chief Negotiator now?

While he continues to talk about *talanoa* with overseas leaders, the Honourable Prime Minister has made no effort at all to have climate change discussions with the Opposition in this House and has always been promoted by the two leaders; the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the NFP.

There is no *talanoa* consensus here, because despite all his talk about it when he travels so frequently, the political atmosphere in his own Parliament is pretty toxic except being directed by the Madam Speaker. He does not like the Opposition because we question him and his Government and we are required to do so and thank you Madam Speaker for your role.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! If you think that they are too disruptive because we and the viewers want to hear what you are saying. We almost cannot hear you. You can stop and when they are finish, then you can speak again. We will give you extra time.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and I hope the public is listening to that. It takes a woman to recognise our democracy.

(Laughter)

His environmental record in Fiji is dreadful. As a result of his Government’s negligence, our country has become an extended rubbish dump, with waste scattered all over the place, rivers frequently burst their banks and drains overflow causing regular destructive flooding. There is still no integrated policy for dealing with this. The SDL Government was processing a strategic development plan 2003 rolled over to 2011 and a 20-year development plan 2001-2020. But that opportunity was lost with the Bainimarama *coup* of 5th December, 2006.

The Honourable Prime Minister’s Green Growth Framework which he has signed is a joke. It is actually self-incriminating. It refers to the challenge in Fiji of lack of leadership and networking for sustainable development. It seems he is knocking his own leadership. What research has he carried out? I tried to do some research to offer but the speaker did not even want to talk to me for the whole week, when I wanted to offer him my research on climate change but anyway, Madam Speaker, it is offered, it is offered to the Government.

This Government has ignored the framework’s proposal for a Waste Management Authority. A very serious failure considering the massive problem of disposing and processing waste in an environmentally responsible manner. Madam Speaker, the Honourable Assistant Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment did mention the policy in her budget response but implementation process is a black hole of wastage, duplication and bureaucratic bundling, recommended for monitoring (Audit Report year ended December 2014, Parliamentary Paper No. 40 of 2018, pages 32 and 33). A recommendation by Audit to clean up their mess.

Madam Speaker, there is a plastic bag plague, a true blight on our landscape and the ocean. Other island countries such as Samoa, Vanuatu, the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshalls and Palau have reportedly banned single use plastic bags. Fiji, the environmental champion of the region and the world, is lagging behind when it should be leading from the front. So, far it has been reluctant to take that tough decision to ban plastic bags. Some of us in the Opposition suspect that this is because the manufacturers are among the Government's friends and supporters. So, tell the Fijian families the truth. Does the FijiFirst Government care?

Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me this time and the space to present to the voters of Fiji and to the public that we do all want the truth.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Management.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Cabinet Ministers, Members of this Honourable House, I also rise to add my voice to those Honourable Members who have spoken before me in commending the Honourable Minister for Economy and his team for a comprehensive and forwarding looking 2018-2019 National Budget.

Madam Speaker, I support the intentions of the Budget to deal with the current realities and its vision to build our economy for our future generation.

Madam Speaker, the 2018-2019 Budget is an audacious and historical financial plan, one that builds on the nine straight years of economic growth and progress and the longest running period of growth in Fijian history. It is a document that is built on the successes of previous years and of course in a responsible manner, in a caring manner as well, and the Budget empowers laying out new and better economic opportunities for all Fijian families.

I have so much to cover, Madam Speaker, within the limited time that I have but the two Honourable Assistant Ministers have spoken on Rural Development and of course on Agriculture and I will just try to highlight a few particularly with the National Disaster Management and Meteorological Services and of course, add further on agriculture. But before I do that, Madam Speaker, let me just clarify few issues raised by the Honourable Members of the Opposition.

I will start probably with the Honourable Dr. Samisoni. I would invite her after this to drive through Nasese to her bread shop and look if there is a rubbish dump along that place and see how the beautification programme through the Suva City Council has made a significant change to that place, Madam Speaker.

On non-implementation of budgeted activities and programmes, Madam Speaker. This is not new, every civil servant sitting on the other side of the House, Madam Speaker, and former Ministers are well aware of this. It is just a simple plan about our revenue and our expenditure. But, Madam Speaker, there are unforeseen events as well. We have disasters. We have peacekeeping missions probably that need the services of Fijian peacekeepers and these are unplanned activities that do come in during the financial year.

They are familiar with terms such as "redeployment", "reprioritisation", "virement", "rolled over", this is not new to former civil servants and Ministers who are sitting on the other side of the House, Madam Speaker. They are well aware of this. It is normal, Madam Speaker. It is not promises not being fulfilled, Madam Speaker, but it is a matter of prioritising, based on the needs at those particular moments.

That is why there have to be redeployment of funds. We just have Farm CARE and Family CARE, Madam Speaker. That is the redeployment of funds. I have talked about reprioritisation when needs do arise. Virement, Madam Speaker, or otherwise projects are rolled over. The Wainiyabia Project is a classic example of what is being rolled over.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- The needs are there.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Because of the nature of the work, Madam Speaker, and most of these, let us be honest with ourselves, it is about capacity, it is about the ability of the technical officials to meet the timelines, Madam Speaker. So, this is reality and we have to be honest with ourselves. It is not about the incompetency of governments, but these are realities and any honest leader should be able to stand in this august House and explain why projects are not implemented.

Let me come to this issue about 'R'. Madam Speaker, 76 percent is under 'R'. I sent a quick text to the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture yesterday because I had \$44 million in this year's budget under 'R'. Out of that \$44 million, Madam Speaker, we have already been allocated \$37 million under 'R'. That is 81 percent of implementation. Do not create fear amongst the people.

There are systems and processes for good governance, Madam Speaker. This is about good governance. Let us use agriculture, Madam Speaker. Everyone knows in Fiji that in 2001 there was a big Agriculture Scam in the history of Fiji. Peniasi Kunatuba was one of the victims, Sakiusa Bole was one of the victims, Suliasi Sorovakatini was one of the victims. This is about good governance, Madam Speaker. This is taxpayers' money and it has to be used responsibly. That is why Government has put in place systems and processes to ensure that taxpayers money are well utilised.

Let me come to Vanua Levu, Madam Speaker. Again, I continue to say in this House, Government is committed to the Look North Policy then we came into place, no one is going to deny that. It is Government's responsibility. But let me tackle this issue about Macuata Holdings as raised by the Honourable Member and, of course, Wainikoro Fishing Project as well, Madam Speaker.

The Honourable Member was the Assistant Roko and the *Turaga Taukei* Nawaivuvu was Roko, Ratu Jone Matanababa, Mosese Nakoroi was the Assistant Roko, we had a meeting about Macuata Holdings, Madam Speaker. Inia Seruiratu was Commissioner.

Madam Speaker, I convened a meeting wanting to assist Macuata Holdings. There were issues, one, internal bickering. The Honourable Member would know and will not deny that we had a meeting in Naduri and the late Adi Sainimili Dyer had to stand up at the meeting and plead with the chiefs and the Chairman and officials of the Macuata Holdings to please settle their differences so that Macuata could move forward. We organised with the Fiji Development Bank their interest. Sireli Leweniqila was the Chairman of Macuata Provincial Council. After that meeting, the interest for Macuata Provincial Holding was decreased by FDB from 8 percent to around 3 percent to bring down all the overdue, Madam Speaker, and they were to again submit a request for write-off later on.

The development of the area opposite the Commissioner's Office. I must state before this Honourable House that Macuata Holdings had the development plan for that, Madam Speaker. However, they did not have the funds and that is why the Ministry of Lands had to look for key investors who had the funds, Madam Speaker, who could develop that property at Naiyaca (the name of the place) so that Labasa could expand onto that side of the river. There were plans already drawn years ago to shift the market. Now we have the Fiji National University, last week was the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Damodar City.

Madam Speaker, if we were in Government then, because we have the *iTaukei* land development allocation which has now increased to \$12 million, that would have been the solution to the problem. So I invite the Turaga Tui Namuka to come this side of the House because we have that money, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, Wainikoro was a JICA project between the Ministry of Fisheries and the Department of Cooperatives but it was mismanagement again by them, Madam Speaker.

(Chorus of interjections)

Madam Speaker, when we got into Macuata, I wanted to check Wainikoro and then I saw that there were some problems with that Cooperative and there was some arrangement. I initiated, Madam Speaker, the investigation and as a result of that investigation, the guy from Druadrua was jailed and one from Cooperatives as well (a government official and one of your boys).

(Chorus of interjections)

What is lacking, Madam Speaker, is leadership, I will come back to the agriculture revolution. I will leave that for a while now, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to clarify some of those and, of course, we did a lot to Muanidevo. We were in Muanidevo again last week, Honourable Member.

Fiji as a Small Island Developing State, is vulnerable to the effects of global warming, climate variability and climate change. The recent tropical cyclones since 2016 are stark reminders of the profound impacts on the country's economy and livelihood. Madam Speaker, I just wanted to say that climate services are increasingly important to support climate mismanagement, adaptation to climate change and sustainable development of many sectors.

Let me assure every Honourable Member of this august House, Madam Speaker, that the Government is more than ever committed to leading the fight against climate change. Fiji was the first nation to ratify the Paris Agreement and also the first Small Island State to lead the global effort for climate action last year in Bonn at the COP 23 Meeting.

Madam Speaker, the best way to adapt to climate change is to build resilience to climate vulnerability. To this effect, the Government through the Fiji Meteorological Services continues to work closely with key international partners, including the World Meteorological Organisation to raise our status in climate services, both in the country and to the Pacific region, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Government has invested significantly in recent years to build a climate resilient society. Between 2013 and 2015 over \$1.2 million was spent on the upgrading of the National Climate Monitoring Telemetric System Project in view of sustainable socio economic development and in the current financial budget, Madam Speaker, allocations are also provided and, of course, for a Media Centre and the Water Level and Rainfall Telemetry Stations.

I also wish to mention, Madam Speaker, that in National Disaster Management, the two were merged together with Meteorological Services to create the Ministry of Disaster Management and Meteorological Services in the current financial year, Madam Speaker.

But the further funding support in 2017 and 2018 National Budget included \$350,000 for the upgrade of outer island stations and the construction of the new Labasa Weather Office for installation of water level and the rainfall telemetry instruments to name a few.

For the Labasa Weather Office, Madam Speaker, we are just waiting now for the clearance from the electrical contractors and hopefully that the office will be open soon so that it can provide services as well. The substantial capital grants allocated for the 2018-2019 Budget financial year, Madam Speaker, the Fiji MET Services will be in a better position to complete all the rollover projects since 2016, and I have talked already about rollover projects, Madam Speaker.

These projects will address the immediate weather forecasting data needs for disaster risk management and reduction including the enhancement of the timely monitoring of extreme events, warning system such as tropical cyclone and floods.

On NDMO, Madam Speaker, we have completed the draft of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and, Madam Speaker, this is in line with the Sendai Framework for disaster risk management and disaster risk reduction.

Fiji has been at the forefront in the region and also internationally for putting together an integrated National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy that is aligned to the global DRR Framework known as the Sendai Framework and we just had the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia last week. Madam Speaker, the lady Chairperson did acknowledge Fiji's exemplary progress on achieving the targeting of the Sendai Framework through the successful drafting of the Fiji National Disaster Reduction Policy.

I have talked about resilience very briefly, and this includes warning systems. As we speak, we are installing (we have already completed) most of the sirens for tsunami warning systems at the WAF Depot in Kinoya, FINTEL in Vatuwaqa, My Suva Park, Government Training Centre at Nasese, at Veivueti House here in Draiba, Albert Park, Civic Car Park and, of course, the Adventist High School in Lami. We are looking at the Government Shipping Services in Walu Bay and RFMF Officers School in Vatuwaqa.

This is very, very critical for us. We have to prepare for not only cyclones and floods but, of course, we are in the rim of fire and we also need to prepare for earthquakes and tsunamis. This is why Government is installing these sirens along Suva and hopefully this can be expanded to the other built-up areas, cities and municipalities around Fiji as well.

Madam Speaker, we have also conducted drills to prepare people. We have started with Cluster One School in March and, of course, the second tsunami drill is scheduled for this July. It will be conducted along the Nasese areas and the following agencies will be engaged:

1. President's Office;
2. iTaukei Affairs Board;
3. Ministry of iTaukei Affairs;
4. Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources;
5. Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and
6. The Police Academy.

So again preparation continues, Madam Speaker, and of course, I also wish to assure this Honourable House that of course with our capability as well, we have been conducting training for our sealegs boats which were a donation by New Zealand and of course, the other capabilities that we have. Let me just briefly touch on agriculture, Madam Speaker.

Let me say that Government has allocated a total of \$96.8 million in the 2018-2019 National Budget to the Ministry of Agriculture. Madam Speaker, this is an increase of 12 percent, with a value of about \$10.5 million. In addition to this Budget, the Ministry also received \$9.2 million in donor funding

in terms of aid-in-kind and a further \$2 million to develop the goat meat industry and establish the brucellosis free farms.

Madam Speaker, if we add the total budget under Head 30 of \$96.8 million, the \$9.2 million aid-in-kind and the \$2 million under Head 50, the Ministry's total budget is a record of \$108 million. Based on the \$96.8 million budget, the Ministry of Agriculture will receive \$37.8 million for Operating Expenditure and \$55 million for capital with a VAT allocation of \$4 million. There has been significant increases in the Ministry of Agriculture budget since it became a standalone Ministry from Fisheries and Forestry in 2014.

In 2013, Madam Speaker, the Ministry received a total budget of \$51.3 million and it has been consistently increasing since then. The 2018 Budget sees an increase of 89 percent compared to 2013.

Madam Speaker, in the few responses from the other side, again, we have been asked about the agriculture revolution. Let me put this to rest before I conclude.

Just seeing bullocks working in a farm does not mean that there is no agriculture revolution. I cannot imagine that line of thinking because all revolutions are simply born out of an idea, a vision, a dream and revolutions have strategic intents and long term end stage, Madam Speaker. It is not a band-aid short term solution, it is about the long term.

Madam Speaker, Yasser Arafat started the Palestinian Revolution, Arafat is no longer there but the revolution is still alive because it is about a long term vision. Chairman Mao started the Chinese Revolution, where is Chairman Mao? But the Chinese Revolution continues, Madam Speaker. Osama Bin Laden is gone, Madam Speaker, but the revolution continues. That is this side of the House.

We are long-term and strategic in our line of thinking, Madam Speaker. It is not a short-term quick fix because there are so many things. If we want to modernise Agriculture, that is the vision; modernising Fiji's Agricultural sector. It is about organised productions, technologies and systems and processes, Madam Speaker, it is about aggressive researching, aggressive marketing and improving the capacities and the capabilities within the Ministry, Madam Speaker.

We are one of the Ministries that have that allocation of about \$500,000, Madam Speaker, so that we can improve service delivery. The Honourable Minister for Economy in his Address said that there are very limited people with PhDs in Government Ministries. I am proud to say, Madam Speaker, that we have three already in the Ministry and four are also in the process of completing their PhDs, Madam Speaker. We have three Veterinary Officers who have graduated, so that is about the agriculture revolution. It is a long term strategic intent, Madam Speaker, we are not looking at short-term games. Look at the data and statistics, the agriculture production and exports has increased; 3 percent.

The Honourable Professor Biman Prasad is smiling, Madam Speaker, because it is happening, but it is not a short-term fix, it is a strategic long-term intent, so when you are talking about agriculture revolution, Rome was not built in a day, Madam Speaker, a journey with a thousand miles starts with a first step and we are in that process.

This is a good, responsible Budget, Madam Speaker, and I strongly support this Budget. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Balmindar Singh to take the floor.

HON. B. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers, colleagues, media personnel, members of the public in the gallery and Fijians who are watching from the comforts of your homes in Fiji or abroad: *bula vinaka* to you all from this august House.

Madam Speaker, we leaders have a patriotic duty, we must have civic pride and responsibility reforming political system that was corrupt, that we must create an economy that works for all; not just the very wealthy by fostering good governance principles which will be embraced by our future leaders.

The 2018–2019 Budget Estimates provides perfect vehicle and window of opportunity for united action precisely across political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal spectrum.

Madam Speaker, everyone should be ready to embrace Government's initiatives to rise above sectional interest with great maturity. Real prosperity comes from every spectrum of the economic value chain and everybody in the country must work together in the growth mode that enables future generation to adore or admire.

Madam Speaker, like my colleagues on this side of the House, I rise to support the 2018-2019 Budget before this august House. In doing so, Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Honourable Minister for Economy for continuing the bold strategies in building our economy for future generations and empowering the Fijians.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to further thank the Honourable Minister and the team for their hard work in producing this Budget, which is appreciated and acknowledged by the Fijians. It is the people's Budget and reflects Government's commitment and services to the Fijians. The evidence of growth for all sectors of the economy is there for all of us to see. Indeed, the level of consistent growth is a commendable achievement and unprecedented. Madam Speaker, the positive near term outlook shows that the hard work of civil servants is paying off.

Madam Speaker, the pinnacle in excellence delivery to the Fijians remains the cornerstone of the FijiFirst Government. This is reflected in the provisions of the 2018-2019 Budget.

Our people in villages and rural settlements, as well as those in the maritime have been Government's priority. The Bainimarama-led Government is committed at improving the livelihoods of all Fijians by prioritising amongst things like proper water reticulation, housing, electricity and infrastructure with provisions for better quality healthcare services, seniors in elderly care, budget increase in education and up skilling intervention for poverty reductions and transformation of the lives of all Fijians in the 2018-2019 Budget.

Madam Speaker, while we address such concerns, the 2018-2019 Budget is a strategic and integrated plan to position Fiji for the future. Strategic because it invites future needs and issues and purpose, early preparations and remedy to meet them and integrated because it pulls together an integrated efforts across all stakeholders, workers, businesses, civil societies, governments and our citizens to build a better Fiji for everyone. The Bainimarama-led Government will continue to foster a caring and cohesive society. Madam Speaker, we must remain in a society where all of us as individuals, members of families and citizens take pride and caring for ourselves, our children, seniors and one another.

Madam Speaker, ultimately, matters in having a united Fiji, united people with a common purpose to build the kind of society we want to live in the past and pass legacy for our children to admire. One of the things that stuck me was the deep sense of responsibility that Fijians felt and shared. A responsibility towards future of their family, community and country. As Fiji undergoes demographic

and social changes that plays greater demand of families, the community and the Government, we must face these changes together and respond collectively as one.

Madam Speaker, over the decade, Government has increased the support for our citizens by providing greater assurance to various ongoing initiatives and policy reforms. The Government is committed to improving the health of all Fijians, regardless of income or geographic location. The Bainimarama-led Government aims to achieve this through a wide-reaching and holistic approach; from the provision of preventative, curative and rehabilitative medical-care and treatment to the encouragement of healthy lifestyles to the training and education of a healthy public. Hence, to achieve these initiatives, Government has increased the budget provision for the Ministry (\$13.9 million) in the 2018-2019 Budget.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government would embark on new initiatives through the 2018-2019 Budget, such as:

- \$5 million is allocated to fund parenthood adjusted payment after childhood, Fijian mothers from families with household income below \$30,000 will be given a \$1,000 grant in the HFC Account for each newborn baby registered in the BDMO.
- \$1 million is allocated to begin preparatory work for a Fiji Centre for Communicable Disease Control.
- \$1 million is allocated to engage consultancy services to undertake preparatory work on the Lodon Health Centre.
- \$500,000 allocated for the upgrade and maintenance of Korovou Hospital.
- \$2.5 million is allocated to upgrade the classification of the Valelevu Health Centre to a sub-divisional hospital.
- \$3 million is allocated for the upgrade of Lautoka Hospital Operating Theatre and X-Ray Department.
- \$1.7 million is allocated for the upgrade of Labasa Hospital, including general interior upgrading and realignment of various wards.
- \$2 million has been set aside to fund the operation of new kidney treatment centre in Suva and Nadi to address the growing incidents of kidney disease. This is one of the leading causes of death in Fiji. I heard from the Opposition that this was one of their initiatives but this is now documented.

Madam Speaker, implementation of new initiatives in the 2018-2019 Budget provision shows the FijiFirst Government's commitment in improving lifestyle of all Fijians. The Government will address the implementation and the monitoring of all ongoing initiatives and oversee that all those initiatives are delivered within the timeline and within the budget provision.

Madam Speaker, the Bainimarama-led Government is putting extensive resources behind the upgrading of the nation's healthcare network. The FijiFirst Government remains dedicated to keeping the cost of healthcare in Fiji to a bare minimum and affordable healthcare, and that is the fundamental and constitutional rights of all Fijians.

Madam Speaker, the Bainimarama-led Government is seeking innovative ways to deliver high quality medical services and health education that reaches every Fijian community no matter how remote.

Madam Speaker, before I resume my seat, allow me to quote Albert Einstein once said:

“Try not to become a man of success but rather to become a man of value and leave legacies behind for the community to dwell on.

Ethical work is going to fill a large part of people’s lives and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work and the only way to do great work is to love what you do for the citizens and your country.

Madam Speaker, with those words, I join my colleagues in support of the 2018-2019 Budget and commend it to this House. Thank you for the opportunity, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call upon the Honourable Prem Singh to have the floor.

HON. P. SINGH.- Thank you, Madam Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate and Madam Speaker, just to dispel some of the thoughts that were expressed in this House last night. Last night we heard from an Honourable Government Member that Fiji only made real progress and became a modern nation after 2006. This basically means that for 36 years from 1970 when Fiji gained independence, every decision that successive Governments made were of no value. His speech was an attempt to erase our history and sounded like Fiji was a nation, only 12 years of age!

We understand his misguided passion, Madam Speaker, about his party because we know he is amongst many who have not been told whether they will get an Election ticket or not. The Honourable Member bragged about his profession as a pharmacist and grossly misread our colleague, the Honourable Parmod Chand’s contribution on free medicine. The Honourable Member is a professional and we sincerely hope he does not misread a medicine prescription of a patient from his party.

But the Honourable Member, who accurately dispenses medicine prescribed by a doctor to cure the illness of a patient, last night dispensed political nonsense that was prescribed for him. His script tried to dispense a product that is about to expire in the hope that people will be fooled into buying it at a heavily discounted price. Unfortunately for him, there are and will be no takers of both him and his soon to be expired party.

Madam Speaker, if everything that happened in this country for 30 years was regressive and there was no merit in anything that was done or in the recruitment of personnel for employment, how did his leader, the Honourable Prime Minister, rise through the ranks to become RFMF Commander? Why did his Party’s General Secretary, the Honourable Attorney-General, return to Fiji after becoming a lawyer, obtained decent and meaningful jobs and became politically active by taking advisory role to two political parties during the 2001 and 2006 General Elections respectively?

Madam Speaker, after driving down the sugar industry for the last 12 years, we are at least pleased that this Government has copied our idea of a guaranteed price of sugarcane of \$85 a tonne of cane, which is also based on the creation of a stabilization fund that will also be supported by the sale of assets that the Fiji Sugar Corporation does not need. At least, this Government has tried to match the NFP, but Madam Speaker, the die has been cast.

Our plan is vastly different. Listen to this! We will implement a minimum guaranteed price of \$100 per tonne of cane. This means that the price of sugarcane will not be less than \$100 and in all likelihood, will be more than this because our sugar production will increase and if sold at the right price, growers will enjoy a financial windfall because we will not only look at pricing, we will look at the field statistics, field services and financial aspects of the entire industry.

Madam Speaker, the sugar industry is far too important for it to be allowed to die a slow and painful death to the detriment of our economy and the livelihood of some 200,000 people, who depend on it either directly or indirectly. It is beyond any doubt that the industry has been run down by this Government in the last 12 years because of a total lack of knowledge and experience of how the industry works - right from the cane plating to sugar production in the mills. Our industry has been run by those who cannot differentiate the root of a cane stalk from its top and this is no exaggeration. One only has to look at Government's 5-year to 20-year National Development Plan on Sugar to verify what we are saying.

Madam Speaker, on 25th November, 2017, the Honourable Attorney-General and the Minister responsible for Climate Change in a *Fiji Times* report titled, "AG clarifies NDP", defended Government's 5-year and 20-year National Development Plan, saying it was based on an output from a technical group who produced results and tables and Government stuck by those results. This, after the NFP pointed out the fictional forecasts on sugarcane and sugar production statistics.

Therefore, the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy stood by grossly incorrect and future outputs and results of the sugar industry, that are simply unrealistic and unachievable by every world standard. Simply, Government has taken ownership of what can only be described as a 'pie in the sky' in relation to statistical output of the sugar industry.

Madam Speaker, the use of misleading statistics and projections on sugarcane and sugar production is unbelievable. No Government in the world apart from the worst dictatorships would manufacture statistics in the manner that is contained in the National Development Plan, hypocritically also labelled as being about transformation. The TCTS (tonnes of cane required to manufacture one tonne of sugar), crop and sugar production statistics, both for the 2016 and 2017 harvesting and crushing seasons, as well as in the future are totally misleading.

Madam Speaker, the sugar industry statistics are a fraud. Even statistics for the 2016 season, which were available when the plan was formulated were wrong. The plan states that in 2016, Fiji produced 1.6 million tonnes of cane and 164,000 tonnes of sugar. The correct statistics recorded by the industry is 1.38 million tonnes of cane and 139,503 tonnes of sugar at a TCTS of 9.9. If this is not deliberately misleading the rest of the world, then what is it?

The same is true for statistics and projections for 2017 to 2021. The 2017 cane production is stated to be 1.8 million tonnes and sugar production at 313,000 tonnes and an unbelievable TCTS of 5.75. No sugar producing country in the world has ever achieved or will record such a TCTS. The actual production in 2017 was 1.63 million tonnes of cane and 180,388 tonnes of sugar at a TCTS of around 9.03.

Madam Speaker, the fraudulent concoction of figures gets worse. For 2018, cane production is forecasted at two million tonnes with 361,000 tonnes of sugar produced at a TCTS of 5.54. In 2019, cane production is predicted to be 2.2 million tonnes and sugar production is stated to be 402,000 tonnes at a TCTS of 5.47. For 2020 and 2021, cane production is listed to be three million tonnes and sugar production is forecasted as 438,000 tonnes at a TCTS of 6.84. This is a sick joke, Madam Speaker.

Fiji sugar industry's best TCTS ratio was only twice - 7.5 in 1977 and 1987; and 7.9 in 1975 and 1994, when the four mills produced 517,000 tonnes of sugar. This Government is clueless about how to revive the sugar industry.

The Bureau of Statistics data shows that in 2015, only 39,000 hectares of cane was harvested, compared to 58,000 hectares in 2006. This is a massive decline of 19,000 hectares. This confirms that the industry has taken a nosedive under both, the military regime and the FijiFirst Government.

The Plan also confirms that the FijiFirst Government will not build a new sugar mill in Rakiraki, following its decision to close down the Penang Mill because cartage to Rarawai is projected for the next five years in the 2018-2019 Budget. Here again, the Plan erroneously states that Government provides cartage subsidy to Ra growers for 175,000 tonnes of cane when the total production in Rakiraki last year was only 118,000 tonnes, Madam Speaker.

It is absolutely shameful that the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister for Sugar launched such a National Development Plan during COP 23 in Bonn last year, which is full of false and unrealistic projections. As the Minister for Sugar, he should be concerned about the fraudulent statistics because the buck ultimately stops with him.

The fundamental flaw of this whole charade is that, if this National Development Plan for the next five to twenty years is based on erroneously flawed data such as those already outlined for sugar, then naturally other sectors of development are superficial and unachievable. But cane growers, their families, cane cutters, farm labourers, mill workers and indeed, the 200,000 people whose livelihood is directly and indirectly dependent on sugar need not worry. I say this Madam Speaker, because change is coming.

Madam Speaker, the agriculture sector has also been entangled in cobwebs under this Government and like last year's budgetary allocation, this year's allocation of almost \$97 million will be haphazardly used, like managing a disaster. The agriculture sector has been entangled in cobwebs, yet on 24th March last year in Parliament, Government, especially the Honourable Minister for Agriculture joked and poked fun at the NFP for suggesting viable and credible alternatives.

However, six months later, in September 2017, he admitted on *FBC News* that Fiji's food import bill was high and a major concern. He said Fiji was spending an average of \$788 million annually over the last five years to import what he called 'high value vegetables', like cucumber, celery, capsicum and lettuce, that could be grown locally.

This year, what does this Government do? It reduces duty on imported fruits and vegetables to zero. This is all well and good, especially for foods not grown locally, but will it reduce our import bill? Will it encourage our local farmers to plant high value vegetables?

Madam Speaker, the plight of the dairy industry and dairy farmers is an example of another Government reform or policy that has failed to meet its objectives. The reality of our dairy industry is excruciatingly painful. An average of 80 million litres of milk is consumed each year. Our dairy industry is producing less than 10 million litres of milk annually. This means that 70 million litres of milk either liquid or in powdered form is imported. It also means we are producing only 12.5 percent of Fiji's total milk consumption while 87.5 percent is imported.

Our dairy farmers are struggling to survive but the monopolistic Fiji Dairy Limited, a subsidiary of Southern Cross Foods Limited continues to be a healthy profitable entity. Thanks to the 32 percent duty concession or zero duty it enjoys for milk and butter imports.

Dairy farmers are paid an average of 80 cents per litre of raw milk, which is graded in three parts. The consumers are paying an exorbitant price for butter made locally from zero-duty imported butter, which is only salted and packaged here, and the consumers are paying almost \$10 for 500 grammes of butter.

What about the astronomical increase in the price of beer, the drink that the poor and the ordinary consume socially? Is it to control NCDs or rake in multi-millions of dollars in taxes? Madam Speaker, let me give an example. Under the new price hike, Paradise Beverages sells to retailers a carton of Fiji

Bitter that we know as long neck, at a price of \$65.38 VIP or \$59.98 VEP. The company retains only \$24.07. We have documentary evidence that we can give to the other side.

Therefore, we ask the Honourable Minister for Economy to clarify whether or not Government makes a minimum of \$35.91, or a maximum of \$41.07 on a carton of 12 bottles of 700 millilitre long-neck Fiji Bitter. That is the duty component, Madam Speaker. Apart from this, the consumers are paying 9 percent VAT on it in shops. If this is the case, it is daylight robbery.

Government makes more money than the brewer. A social necessity for the working class is being used to make multimillion dollars for Government at their expense. The case is similar for cigarettes, Madam Speaker, this is the reality.

Madam Speaker, without the exorbitant rise in duty, the social drink would cost much cheaper. Increasing excise duty on beer and cigarettes has not reduced NCDs, Madam Speaker, we are a world leader in this. All it does is rake in multimillion dollars in revenue for Government.

Furthermore, the elasticity of demand does not reduce beer consumption. Those who prefer beer will continue to purchase it, but the costs will be borne by their families and their communities. Do all families then matter in such a policy direction or does Government revenue trump all?

Madam Speaker, yesterday, we heard of developments of informal settlements or squatters and how well this Government has done. Let us go back to 23rd December, 2014, in Clopcott Settlement in Ba. There was huge fanfare and residents believe that they were getting a lease. This was not to be, all they got was an approval notice and nothing happened. Three times in this Parliament, we have asked questions about Clopcott residents.

In April, the Honourable Attorney-General's response to our question said that residents would get a lease in May. May has come and gone, we have been told by the residents that the Honourable Minister for Local Government, together with the Ba Town Council has held meetings with not only the Clopcott residents, but with other squatter settlements in Ba.

We have been told that initially, the residents were given a letter asking them to pay \$1,500 each, which was later verbally withdrawn. Instead, they have been verbally told to pay \$150 each to the Ba Town Council to be paid to iTLTB, and then they will get leases in August or September. The answer is obvious, Madam Speaker.

Almost four years later, Clopcott residents, the first to receive approval notices will be given proper leases, if the Minister's assurance is to go by! So much so for providing approval notices and promising them almost every informal settlement. What a farce, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker, we have a thoroughly disenchanted Civil Service and teaching fraternity. This is an indisputable fact. They are forced to retire at the productive age of 55 years. They are on contracted employment and their employment security is uncertain due to regressive policies being churned out by this Government every now and then.

There is huge disparity in salaries. Teachers who have worked for more than 25 years receive less because they do not have a degree or diploma. Those who have entered the profession recently with qualifications are paid more. This has to change, and we will do it.

We will increase retirement age to 60 years, we will throw away the contracts and put all our civil servants and teachers on permanent employment so they do not have to worry about their job security. We will ensure that their salaries are commensurate with their qualifications and experience.

Madam Speaker, we have had 12 years of farcical, surface level solutions and pie in the sky dreams. Madam Speaker, 12 years is a long time in the life of a Government. It is time this Government is shown the door and allowed to wander into extinction.

(Laughter)

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Speaker, with those concluding remarks, I thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call on the Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar to take the floor.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Minister for Economy, colleagues and the people of Fiji; I thank you for allowing me this opportunity to deliver my speech on the 2018-2019 Budget.

Madam Speaker, when I was in high school, my principal told me that there are three categories of people in this world. The first are those who make things happen, the second are those who see things happen and the third category involves those who do not know what is happening. When it comes to Fiji, it is the FijiFirst Government that makes things happen. The people of Fiji see things happen and then we have the Opposition Members who do not know what is happening.

(Laughter)

The level of contribution that the Opposition has been making since yesterday and right from 2014, is a testimony to that. The Opposition Parties are running out of ideas to tackle FijiFirst and are now resorting to fear mongering, hoping to get votes.

For the past few days, weeks and even months we have been hearing horror stories spread by the Opposition. One party is saying that Fiji has taken so much loan from China that Fiji will be sold to China. The same person who spread this rumour happens to be the leader from outside or the non-travelling coach of this team, who himself sold his land on Vanua Levu to a Chinese.

Then there is another party, who went around saying somewhere in Labasa that Fiji has taken so much loan from Iran, Iraq or Pakistan that Fiji will be sold to them. This is utter nonsense, Madam Speaker, utter nonsense! I have some other words for such stories but if I use those words, it will become unparliamentary.

Little do they know that under international laws, it is not possible for one country to take over another anymore. If any such thing was possible, all those countries who have taken loans from other country would have been taken over by their creditors years ago. To put things into perspective, let me give examples of some other countries and their debt to GDP levels. Those countries are seen as some of the strongest economies on earth.

Japan, Madam Speaker, has a 239.2 percent debt to GDP ratio. Singapore - 112 percent; United States of America - 107.4 percent; Canada - 92.3 percent. And guess what? Those countries have not been taken over by China, Japan, Korea, Iraq or Pakistan.

In contrast, Fiji's debt to GDP ratio is only 45.6 percent. The Opposition goes further and makes it seem like everything in Fiji is wrong. They claim that there is little economic development and everyone is finding it difficult to make a living. They make it seem like we are living in a desert, where nothing grows and nothing happens.

Madam Speaker, one just needs to travel along the Queen's Road from Ba to Suva and they will see the development that is happening around us, with shops, warehouses and other buildings coming up, and that is just one example.

I have family who travel from overseas regularly and have been doing so for the past 40 years, Madam Speaker. They tell me that the level of development they have seen under the FijiFirst rule has not happened in the previous 44 years after Independence.

Madam Speaker, under the FijiFirst Government, we have many social policies to empower Fijians. We have the old-age pension, food voucher programme, free bus fare, free education, zero income tax for people earning under \$30,000, free Legal Aid, TELS and Toppers Scheme, grants for new home buyers, subsidised electricity charges, Free Medicine Scheme, and now we give \$1,000 per child, who is born and registered with the Births, Deaths & Marriages Office. It was never happened before.

Even the national minimum wage which the Opposition is so obsessed with, was introduced by the FijiFirst Government. The people who are talking about \$4 and \$5 minimum wage had no interest in legislating a minimum wage when they were in power. No other Government did that, Madam Speaker.

In addition, we have given \$470 million to ordinary Fijians to rebuild after *TC Winston*. We have given around \$173 million to Fijians after *TC Keni* and *TC Josie*. No Government anywhere in the world does that. They call it freebies but we do it because we love and care about our people and their families.

I was talking to a father from Koronubu in Ba, Madam Speaker, and he told me that he supports the FijiFirst Government for one basic reason, among the many other reasons. He has three children in school. The school bus fare from his settlement to town per child is 85 cents. A further 35 cents from town to the school. That is \$1.20 per child, one way. In a week, he would be paying a total of \$36 in just bus fares to send his three children to school.

Under the FijiFirst Government's free bus fare scheme, the Government is paying \$36 per week to get his children to school. Taking that, his children attend school for 40 weeks per year, the Government is paying \$1,440 on his behalf. In four years of the scheme, the FijiFirst Government would pay a massive \$5,760 in bus fares alone for parents like him. You tell these people that they live on freebies, then they will throw you out of their villages.

People of Fiji do not get swayed by some greedy politicians, who come with a box of ration and two bottles of water in times of disaster just to get your votes. They will disappear after the elections and post it on *Facebook*.

FijiFirst has done much more for you and will keep doing much more for you than these unscrupulous politicians. FijiFirst will stay here for you. When we give assistance to Fijians, the Opposition calls it "freebies" and when we do not do it, they say that people are living in tents. The Opposition is confused.

The Opposition is now increasingly looking at low budget Bollywood movie, whose script has gone horribly wrong. It is like a movie where there is no coordination. The songs and dances are all here and there. There is no action, there is no message and it is full of comedy performed by some B-Grade comedians.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- These assistance do not happen by magic. We do not have a magic wand which we can just wave and make things happen. We are able to sustain such programmes because we have achieved that through sound financial management. We are managing the economy well.

The Opposition is devoid of ideas. They fail to understand the basic principles of economy. The GDP of Fiji has increased substantially, therefore, the debt to GDP ratio has decreased. For the uninitiated, GDP means the total value of goods and services produced by a country. In simple terms, if I produce this bottle of water for \$1, it has contributed \$1 in terms of goods to the GDP. If I mow someone's lawn for \$10, I have contributed \$10 worth of service to the GDP.

The debt to GDP ratio in simple terms would mean, if you are worth \$100 and take a loan of \$50, your debt to GDP ratio is 50 percent, but if you are worth \$200 and take a loan of \$75, your debt to GDP ratio is only 37.5 percent. That is what the Opposition cannot get. One can take higher loans for development based on their capacity to pay from the value of goods and services they produce. The Opposition's claim that our debt level is critical and a takeover of Fiji is imminent, is false. They are just misleading the people.

It is pertinent that we look at the Government finances for the past years to get a true picture, quoting from the Public Accounts Committee Reports of Mr. Manu Korovulavula. Madam Speaker, the total Government revenue in 1995 was only \$780 million, 1996 was \$729 million, 1997 was \$803 million, 1998 was \$1.4 billion, 1999 was \$1.0 billion and in 2000, it was \$1.35 billion. Only after we came to power in 2007, it went to \$1.5 billion. Thereafter, it went to \$1.8 billion and in 2009, it was \$1.818 billion.

In 2004, the total revenue of the Government was \$1.176 billion. The total expenditure was \$1.322 billion. The net deficit was \$146 million; 82 percent of that money was used as operating expenditure (82 percent was just used for salaries and operating expenditure) and only 18 percent in capital expenditure.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- The public debt to GDP ratio in 2004 was 51 percent. Any guess as to who was the Prime Minister then? Which party was in power? That was Qarase under SDL.

Under the FijiFirst Government, Madam Speaker, in 2015 our revenue increased to \$3.122 billion (GDP increased to \$8.67 billion). In 2016, revenue rose to \$3.128 billion (GDP \$9.6 billion). In the 2016-2017 Budget, our revenue increased to \$3.175 billion (GDP \$9.866 billion) and in 2018-2019 Budget, the revenue projection is at a record of \$4.236 billion (GDP is at a record high of \$11.673 billion). They ask, where do we get the money from? That is your answer there.

In 2006, the total budget was only \$1.2 billion, today it is \$4.7 billion. While the tax rates have been reduced, revenue from direct taxes and indirect taxes have increased. It shows sound financial policies and principles of tax collection, investment and debt management.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I also quote from Mr. Manu Korovulavula's Public Accounts Committee Report that in 1997, the debt to GDP ratio was 54 percent. In 1998, it was 47 percent; 2003, it was 49 percent; 2004, it was 50 percent; 2005, it was 48 percent and in 2006, it was 53 percent. We are doing very well, we are below 45 percent. It is also made possible by that strong leadership of our Prime Minister, the Honourable Bainimarama, and a genuinely democratic Constitution. To have a strong economy, Madam Speaker, we need a strong legislative framework.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Ratu Lalabalavu admitted in Parliament yesterday that the 1990 and the 1997 Constitutions made it legally possible to convert *iTaukei* land to freehold, as was done in Denarau and Momi Bay. It is, therefore, shameful that some people sitting in this very Chamber are praising the 1997 Constitution. That is the primary reason why we should praise and appreciate the 2013 Fijian Constitution which has closed all doors to deprive our *iTaukei* brothers and sisters of their land and made it impossible for such travesty from happening again, and this stability ushered in by the 2013 Constitution, has contributed directly to a strong economy.

In addition, the FijiFirst Government does not take loans to party and merrymaking. We invest 40 percent in capital development and 60 percent in operational expenditure. Compare this to 2004 when a massive 82 percent of the revenue was used in operational expenditure and a mere 18 percent was used for capital projects. Guess, which party was in power and who was the Prime Minister? The SDL. The infrastructure, roads and bridges we build today will be used by generations of tomorrow. It is not an elections budget. We have been doing this all along. We have a long term vision.

The Honourable Leader of NFP said that the last Budget was an elections budget. He says this year's Budget is an election budget. If that is the case, then we have been giving elections budget for the past four years and the eight years prior to that. No wonder the Fijians are so happy with our Government because we have made them election budgets.

The Opposition with all their hollow ideas still think that they can govern better. They think that when and if ever they come to power, they can convert all students' loans to scholarships and raise the minimum wage to \$5 an hour. They are not telling us where they are going to get the money from. The Opposition, Madam Speaker, seems to suddenly have gotten hold of magician David Copperfield's magic wand which they can wave at any time and get the money falling from the sky.

SODELPA, Madam Speaker, cannot manage their own party finances. The Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, has been quoted by *Fiji Village* website on 2nd July, 2018 questioning, how can SODELPA run their next Government if they cannot even pay their workers well? With their 15 Members of Parliament at \$15,000, they received \$225,000 from Parliament, about a quarter of a million dollars.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- They cannot manage a quarter of a million dollar Party budget and dream of managing a \$4.5 billion National Budget.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- The NFP really needs to rise above their mere bread and butter issues or should I say, bread and lamb chops issues.

(Laughter)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Bread, having a monopoly by Honourable Dr. Samisoni.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Ask the students! They will tell you that internet data is equally important. There are other important things than just food items. One needs to see the ethnic make-up at the Hot Bread shops around the country to know why Honourable Dr. Samisoni is so obsessed with ethnicity.

They talk about increasing the number of people below poverty line. It is false, Madam Speaker. We have put the tax threshold to \$30,000 a year. People earning \$30,000 and below are not paying any income tax. VAT has been reduced to 9 percent. Employer contribution for FNPF has gone up to 10 percent; micro-enterprise grant, social welfare assistance and free bus fare for the elderly. The poverty line only exists in the imagination of the Honourable Opposition Members. We are building roads, bridges, airports, hospitals and even flight simulation centres and they are still stuck on the same old tinned fish.

We have now introduced zero charge for people using cards for EFTPOS machines for buses. We are curbing black economy, including e-ticketing. Some people do not like that because now, they cannot hide their money. And then Honourable Parmod Chand comes and tells this House that it has become difficult to do business in Fiji. It is only difficult for people who want to take shortcuts to become wealthy at the expense of the nation. Even, he will agree that e-ticketing is good for the bus industry.

We have enabled Fijians to buy cars. The Opposition, in one breath talks about the increasing number of cars and traffic jam and in the next, they talk about rearing horses and horse farms or barns. If they had their way, Madam Speaker, we will reverse to the Stone Age where we will all see horse traffic between Suva and Nausori.

The National Federation Party says that they will put the price of cane to \$100 per tonne. Such a move will damage the industry. There is no guarantee that the money will be reinvested into the industry. In contrast, we are providing grants right from the ploughing and planting of \$800 per acre, to fertiliser, weedicides and harvesting. We are making responsible decisions. We have guaranteed sugar prices at \$85 per tonne for the next three years. This is sustainable. NFP is just making pies in the sky.

The current price of sugar in Europe is €450 per tonne, that is FJ\$1,080 per tonne. It takes an average of 9 tonnes of cane to make one tonne of sugar. Therefore, the maximum we can earn from the sale of one tonne of sugar in Europe which is \$120 billion. That includes the cost of running the mills, marketing, paying the staff and improving the infrastructure, among other things. Their proposed \$100 per tonne will destroy the industry. They talk of subsidising cane payment and then they talk about debts, it does not make sense. Another Bollywood story.

Our Honourable Prime Minister stands on high moral grounds. We have given more water and power connections. We have built roads and bridges and these people, walls and trenches - walls between different races and trenches between different religions. They say that FijiFirst Party is an MM Party or a Madrasi and Muslim Party. How unpatriotic! Stop this campaign of deceit!

We do not brand people. We brand our products. We help put Fiji's products first. We have rebranded Air Pacific to Fiji Airways. We have rebranded Rewa Rice to Fiji Rice Company under the able management of the mill manager, Mr. Ashrit Pratap, in Honourable Professor Prasad's own backyard in Dreketi. He should go and have a look at the new \$5 million new rice mill there. He will know what we are talking about.

We are proud of Fiji, Madam Speaker. We do not go around belittling Fiji before Australian journalists on *60 Minutes* or *Radio New Zealand*. Madam Speaker, if one travels the King's Road from Ba to Suva they will notice that there are some 84 road humps. Just when your vehicle is about to speed up, a hump appears. Likewise, when I see the Opposition Members, I do not see 18 people, I see 18 roads humps on the road of Fiji's progress. Every time Fiji gains speed, these 18 road humps appear from nowhere.

In the soccer field when you cannot beat the opponent, the technique is you fail the player. It is called "*langi maaro*". This is what they are doing, they have run out of ideas. We make responsible

budgets. We do not make false promises, we do not *langi maaro* here. We do not make false promises in making TELS free. We can make big promises to, o Madam Speaker, but the Honourable Prime Minister stands on high moral ground. We are responsible.

People of Fiji should be careful of these false prophets. The leader who destroyed Fiji in 1987 wants to come back and have a second chance. He closed the National Bank of Fiji the last time. What will he close now, FDB? FNPF? Also, one must not forget that under SODELPA's current leader on the outside, Mr. Sitiveni Rabuka, the Budget of 1993 failed and the SVT Government collapsed, pushing Fiji back to Elections and pushing the bill to the people of Fiji.

Yesterday, Honourable Nawaikula stated that the Government is afraid of Mr. Rabuka. I am telling him, "Don't try to scare us using a Major General because we have a Rear Admiral in our ranks."

I fully support this Budget. Lastly, Madam Speaker, if the Opposition wants to win the coming Elections with their wand and convoluted ideas and thoughts, I say, in your dreams! In your dreams! Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. I now call on the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports to have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. L.B. TUITUBOU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Members of Cabinet, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Members of this House; it gives me great pleasure to respond to the 2018-2019 National Budget like all the other Honourable Members tabled by the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy. I do so with a great deal of excitement as the proposed Budget allocation supports my Ministry, changing direction and will enable us to provide better service to our youths and sports people across the nation.

It is indeed a Family Budget, indeed a Home Budget and indeed a Youth Budget; an exciting announcement. Many young families and couples who generally fall under the youth category of 15 to 35 years of age, face challenges planning for their future. With the new provisions, those young families can plan and use Government assistance to fulfil their family needs.

Madam Speaker, Government continues to provide support in the development of youths in an integrated way and we will do so for the next four years. We continue to be strong advocate for community-based programmes to provide youths with opportunities to develop life-skills. Our programmes promote inclusivity and foster technical and life-skills to sustain livelihoods. We need continued collective and coordinated efforts from both, youth practitioners and educators to ensure success.

I must also acknowledge that the contribution of this Government to youth development is not restricted to the Ministry, but is embedded across several Ministries which we welcome. Issues affecting the youths can only be addressed in a systematic and coordinating way. The Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme provide much-needed support for our young people as they continue their career path which begins with the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Madam Speaker, since we took office in 2014, both I and the Assistant Minister have visited well over 280 villages and youth clubs in settlements in the Western Division - 150 in the Central Division, 100 in the Northern Division and close to 100 in the Eastern Division. Indeed, I have crossed a river 29 times over eight hours to visit the youths of Tubarua and Nasauvere with colleagues from other Ministries, who had never been to those villages.

Through those visits, we have been able to have Talanoa sessions with the youths using the bottom-up approach. Their participation in decision-making at grassroots level is a vital component of our development. Youths must be provided opportunities and platforms to air their views and be respected regarding matters that concern them. This is in line with our Constitution and something this Government encourages.

Madam Speaker, during our consultations, we have received over 1,000 requests and heard issues from communities and youths. These range from water sanitation, education and training, farm roads, agriculture inputs, entrepreneurial needs, sports equipment and development of sports facilities.

We have also heard on many occasions, that youths want to know about climate change, that we need to support youth who drop out of university and we need to address issues through intergenerational dialogue and to educate, especially our generation; that we need to address multiculturalism, as well as violence against women and children.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry has listened, and these are now included in our training offer to the youth. With support from the Fiji Higher Education Commission and Climate Change Unit, the Ministry of Education and various other NGOs and UN agencies, we hope to address the issues raised by our youth.

Madam Speaker, I thank the Government of the day for funding provisions which enabled my Ministry to meet the needs of young people in every way possible to help improve their prospects. We have truly embraced the concept of building values that lead to success and have seen for ourselves the concept - reap success, particularly, Madam Speaker, for young women who are all searching for better opportunities and a stable livelihood.

We have an inclusive approach where we encourage equal participation for women in all our training. We have also increased our outreach to sexual reproduction and health rights. This training is supported by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the UNFPA. Our Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights Manual is now available which will assist trainers to deliver comprehensive training.

Madam Speaker, through our cooperation with UNFPA, I am delighted to say that we are now able to focus on the issue of sexual reproductive health and rights of our youth. Through this and in co-operation with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, the Ministry of Education and NGOs, we will work to roll back the number of teenage pregnancies which would occur when our young men walk away, leaving the young woman and child to fend for themselves. This complements the focus on the family which this Budget encourages.

In addition, Madam Speaker, we are well-positioned to work with the same institution to support the initiative to counteract the prevalence of HIV and AIDS. We need to support those who are HIV positive and living with AIDS as they are someone's brother, sister, cousin or grandparent. It is manageable, it is not the end of the road for everyone.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry will bring more focus to promoting values and social cohesion through youth and sports development. We seek to empower youth through training and opportunities relevant to their needs with the certificates of Attainment and not Participation.

On the sporting front, we are already working more closely with the Fiji National Sports Commission and our National Sports Organisation to increase the mutual benefits, beneficial cohesion between youths and sports development. However, we should not forget that sports development is about all Fijians, not just youths.

The Ministry is committed to enhance integrated holistic and sustainable youth development. We are always conscious of the existing imbalances and current realities. We strive to build on strong foundation of a non-discriminatory Fiji in which young people contribute effectively to nation-building, realising their full potential through social, economic and political development and increasingly, Madam Speaker, addressing climate change issues by building their future in both the blue and green economy.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is improving service delivery further, ensuring the holistic socio-economic development of our target audience, while coordinating and supporting our stakeholders and development partners, including UN agencies.

The Ministry's focus is on building the values that lead to success through investing in young people through youth and sports development programmes. The Ministry provides training, support and infrastructure to the youth of this country to encourage development of leadership, entrepreneurship and gender equality, social and constitutional responsibility.

We are a Ministry for all youths, Madam Speaker, and for all sportspersons. As we expand our programmes to meet the diverse needs of our youths, we need to share the best practices amongst youths to harness their energy, innovation and determination. Youth capacity-building, empowerment and training are our strengths.

The Ministry is the custodian of non-formal education and we are making steady progress in this sector with the Ministry of Education's support. My Ministry has organised a meeting and for the first time, brought together NGOs, CSOs, faith-based organisations and Government Ministries to establish a council to guide the direction and standards for non-formal education in Fiji. I formally launched the Council last month.

The Ministry will continue to provide capacity-building and empower training programmes, encouraging youths to become productive and responsible for our nation. Just over \$1 million has been allocated to fund income-generating projects, our Seeds of Success training, empowerment training, Youth Feed the Nation Programme and Mobile Skills Training. We take our services to the youths where they are, and this is real customer service.

Madam Speaker, last week, I officiated at the Duke of Edinburgh International Awards at Tilak High School in Lautoka and 173 vibrant award recipients received medals (26 Gold, 59 Silver and 88 Bronze). Some medals, Madam Speaker, were simultaneously awarded, both Silver and Bronze.

I am delighted, Madam Speaker, that through this Award we have begun to work closely with the Fiji Police and the PYGMIES Youth Club to address youth crime. The Duke Edinburgh International Award enables young people to achieve as individuals and as a team. It promotes community service, self-discipline, focusses on achieving goals and finally on success. Twenty young people from the PYGMIES Youth Club received awards last week and I am looking forward to give them when they receive gold awards next year.

The programmes have proven successful and with the support and collaboration from the Ministry of Education, we will now be able to reach more young people. So \$30,000 has been allocated to this Award Programme, which is just trying to make positive contribution to the development of young people. We hope to continue our work with the Police and RFMF to reach more youth at risk across the country using the PYGMIES model.

Madam Speaker, we encourage good citizenry, civic pride and volunteerism. Youth make up the largest number of volunteers worldwide. The amount of \$200,000 has been allocated for our Youth Voluntary Organisation Training to encourage more youth to take up volunteerism and community work.

Indeed, many youths are already planting trees, mangroves, regenerating coral and picking up litter and this must extend across our country in support of Fiji's Presidency of COP 23.

In the spirit of co-operation, Madam Speaker, we instituted a successful programme of training, mainly young people with basic carpentry skills, in areas ravaged by *TC Winston*. This brought together the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, the Technical College of Fiji and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Through this Programme, we have trained young men and women in over 60 villages to rebuild their homes because of their lack of carpenters and the materials are in abundance. I am proud to say that the young men and women have successfully constructed houses in those villages. Many also found permanent employment with major construction companies.

Madam Speaker, we have revised the National Youth Policy and will be conducting public consultations beginning on 31st July, 2018 to 8th August, 2018, before finalising the Policy. This is to ensure that our services remain contemporary and cutting edge.

Since the Policy was established, technology has had a major impact on how we work and communicate. It is appropriate that we gather feedback on the revised National Youth Policy so that the voices of our youths are usually reflected and embedded in the Policy, so \$50,000 has been allocated towards this exercise.

Madam Speaker, it is recognised in the National Policy that the marginalised youth, including people with disabilities, women, rural residents, LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning) and ex-offenders, require NFE programmes either as a bridging programme or as an empowering tool to support their development to full potential.

To support more effective and accurate decision-making, Madam Speaker, we have successfully launched a new database in the 2017-2018 financial year. I have been calling for this as it will enhance our decision-making capacity and service delivery to all parts of our country. With the allocation of \$20,000 we will be able to maintain this database and share information with other Ministries and hope that they, likewise, will share their information with us to support the increase coordination of services.

Madam Speaker, I am delighted that just over \$800,000 has been provided to upgrade our four training centres around Fiji, as the Valelevu Training Centre has been upgraded in the last financial year. These upgrades are required to ensure that our training programmes are accredited with the Fiji Higher Education Commission and that we provide to our trainees the best possible residential or learning environment.

We are determined to ensure that our training centres are used 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year to achieve the maximum return of Government's investment. This means that we are open to offer short courses, other training in the evening and weekends, host conferences and team building events throughout the year and the upgrade of our facilities at the Youth Training Centre.

South Youth Training Centre in Yavitu will be conducting Class 2 Courses this year. The Programme commenced with a refresher course in April this year for those who have completed the Class 3 in our youth training centre so the Class 2 carpenter test, we are awaiting confirmation of a date from the Fiji National University (FNU). So once we have that Class 2, we will go to Class 1.

This is empowering the youths, not only in carpentry but also in driver training, canteen ownership, woodcarving, market stalls, Class 6 boat captain licence and I have a list of women and the disabled from the four Divisions or the 14 Provinces. We also will now look into a new sports and education programme in our Youth Training Centre.

Concurrent to our NFE programmes, we will now train our trainees on sports programmes, hence physical education and activity will become an integral component of our training centre, with an allocation of \$10,000.

Madam Speaker, just over \$2 million has been allocated for the Rural Sports Complex to fund the next phases of the construction of the rural sporting facility in Vunisea, Kadavu and Sawaieke, Gau in line with Government's long-term plan to establish modern sports facilities around the country. In addition, we are assessing a site in Vunidawa. This will give all the athletes the opportunity to develop their skills in a wide range of sports and will be constructed by the Chinese Aid Programme. It will also provide opportunities for more fun days to be run to encourage increased physical activity to help us improve our mental and physical wellbeing and combat our non-communicable diseases epidemic.

Madam Speaker, without proper facilities, athletes and participants will not be able to excel in their sport of choice or to get more physically active. The Ministry continues to develop rural sports facilities and grounds for schools and youth alike. A sum of \$500,000 is allocated for this programme and this increase will help us to begin to address the backlog of requests for assistance.

Madam Speaker, Government realises the positive impact sports makes in our nation. Sports and physical activity play a key role in engaging citizens as they promote better social cohesion and dialogue. We need to expose our athletes to top competition as a measure of the progress they have made and still need to make. A total of \$4.8 million is allocated to assist teams and athletes' participation in overseas tournaments. There is also an additional allocation of \$1.5 million for the organisation of the 2018 Oceania Rugby Sevens Tournament.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry is also committed to promote ethical sporting behaviour. In elite sports, athletes are often tempted to use banned performance enhancing substances. In recent years, my Ministry has been working to strengthen the role of the National Anti-Doping Organisation. We have been allocated \$10,000 towards the subscription for National Anti-Doping Organisation.

Madam Speaker, as policy-makers for youth and sports and development, we have a clear responsibility to foster unity in our diversity. A critical role is promoting social inclusion. Developing sports will have immediate social and economic benefits, not only through remittances from employment overseas but from having a more active and healthy population reducing costs to our health system.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Thomas S. Morrison. "Fill your minds with truth, fill your hearts with love and fill your life with service."

Madam Speaker, I just want to respond to Ratu Tevita Niumataiwalu this morning about empowering youths in Namuka. In 2017, I went to Lakeba, he was there but he did not mention about it. We empowered the youths and the people of Veisoqo brought together their documents.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the privilege, therefore, I have no hesitation in supporting the motion to approve the 2018-2019 National Budget.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations to have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Minister for Economy, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members and fellow Fijians; I am delighted to be here this afternoon to show my full support to the phenomenal family-oriented Budget of 2018-2019. This Budget, if it shows one thing, it shows consistency – consistency

of focus, consistency of purpose, consistency of commitment and consistency to the long-term good of the people of this country. It is a budget devoid of gimmicks.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- So I congratulate and commend the Honourable Minister for Economy and his hard working team. They have delivered to us a Budget that is inclusive and family-oriented, with a vision of transforming Fiji.

I must mention also that this Budget, the Honourable Prem Singh was talking about, change is coming; but in reality the people of Fiji know the change has already arrived. The change sits on this side of the House. The Budget as I have said builds on previous budgets, each budget each year, has built on the foundations of previous budgets and will ensure that the life and livelihoods of all Fijians are improved and enhanced and that the most important fabric of society - the family - are able to build themselves up now and well into the future.

If we look at Fiji and how we have been doing in the past few years we can see the impact of that consistent focus on the big picture, that focus on strengthening institutions, it is seen in nine years of consecutive economic growth with the likelihood of 10.

What does this growth mean for us? It means that we can have better infrastructure, better education, better levels of education, better roads, health, improved technology and these all lead to more jobs that ensure that Fijian families have a roof over their heads, shoes on their feet, and food to feed their families.

This exactly what this Budget will deliver for our fellow Fijians. In my Ministry, we have been given the vision and the target to achieve less than 4 percent unemployment in the coming years and we are already on track to achieving this with the current unemployment rate, already sitting at 4.5 percent as seen in the last census. We will continue to work towards achieving that common vision on providing employment and this Budget already includes more than enough to work with.

My Ministry has received a budget of \$16.7 million and we are looking forward to the different programmes that we will implement. We have a National Employment Centre that has been created to grow employment and to address unemployment in Fiji. In this Budget, the Centre has an allocation of \$4.3 million to deliver its services, which include to improve our seasonal work programme, to pursue more workplace attachments, to encourage more placements in the formal employment, to market and promote volunteerism as a career opportunity and to expand the benefits of remittances and community and village improvement programmes undertaken by workers upon returning home.

Madam Speaker, the Seasonal Work Programme has been a great benefit for our country. We intend to strengthen our involvement in this Programme by targeting an increase in the numbers benefitting and also on optimising their earnings and reducing the papers they have to make. This will be strengthened in the new financial year by the appointment of a Liaison Officer in Australia to deal directly with our workers and their employers. This Officer will provide pastoral care to seasonal workers, track remittances sent back home, market our clients in Australia and encourage more uptake of workers by employers in Australia. We will continue to focus on workers from rural and maritime areas that are some distance away from urban areas.

We also continue to ensure that we only send workers off shore who are physically fit and pass their medical assessments. We continue to monitor our returning seasonal workers on how they can make the most of their savings to improve their lives and the lives of their families and communities. Such follow up activity will be enhanced. We have seen that out of this Programme, our workers are able to

improve their homes, purchased outboard motors and personally improving the lives of their families by setting up canteens or buying cars or farming equipment, et cetera. We will continue to stay connected with the families of these workers and visit them and provide pastoral care.

Through our development cooperation with other regional countries, we have been able to place retired nurses and teachers in neighbouring regional countries for volunteer work. We have identified projects to be facilitated by the Fiji Volunteer Service (FVS) with the engagement of volunteers in different Divisions in Fiji. This is our new focus that we have to grow volunteerism as a career or as a pathway into a career. This move is strengthened by the provision of \$1.2 million as the activity budget for volunteer work in Fiji and overseas.

From 2012 to the present, we have been able to engage 251 local volunteers and 120 retired teachers and nurses who were placed in Nauru, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands. We will continue to work with our regional neighbours to continue this programme and look for other opportunities locally and abroad to expand volunteer work.

Under the Formal Employment Services (FES), we provide attachment allowances to encourage employers to take in attachés for work experience and to give them the chance to learn and then later on to be absorbed into the formal employment market. Under our Budget of \$74,000, this fund will be used to pay for their weekly allowances for the work attaches and provide training also on Life Skills, Professional Counselling and Aptitude Test and Employment Skills Training.

We are now close to publishing and launching Fiji's first National Employment Policy, a Policy that will set a roadmap for growing and sustaining employment in Fiji, and a Policy that looks at a range of different areas, focussing on –

- opportunities for the young from education to employment;
- private investments in creating jobs;
- green jobs and green skill sets;
- self-employment;
- overseas employment;
- generating income for those that rely on subsistence living;
- gender equality in employment;
- income earning for persons with disabilities and the elderly;
- ending child labour; and
- strengthening employment relations.

Madam Speaker, apart from programmes directly under my Ministry I also want to highlight other initiatives made possible under this Government that formed part of the Budget and directly impact on employment creation. This include the Young Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) which is a forward looking initiative by Government to change the thinking of the young, so they can dream big and create employment instead of just looking to join the workforce.

With our youth unemployment at 18 percent and half of our population below 27, we need to make sure that our programmes and our focus is youth-heavy and forward looking at all times. Other initiatives that will reduce unemployment in Fiji is also seen in the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Grants, social welfare recipients that are earmarked to be assisted to move from welfare to workfare and the standardising of road stalls to support roadside vendors along our major highways. All other programmes conducted by Ministries of Trade, Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, et cetera, those programmes contribute to developing opportunities for employment.

Madam Speaker, our Budget allocation also touches on building skills and capacity in the skills trade market. We believe in equipping workers with the skills that will help them to get a job and stay in the job. My Ministry also has an allocation for the Apprenticeship Programme where we have a budget allocation of \$400,000 to assist apprentices in government entities. Apprenticeship is managed by the NTPC but through this approach we assist the development of skilled workers, as Apprenticeship has been proven to be the best way of developing skilled tradespeople.

My Ministry will work closely with institutions and employers to have the correct balance between labour market demand and supply. This will ensure that our labour market is not flooded with qualifications that are not highly demanded and funds are not wasted in investing in low demand skill sets.

Madam Speaker, this Government not only allows our children to dream, but we also hold their hand to make sure that whatever dream they have, they can achieve this through our Free Education Programme. We make sure that every child is able to get an education at the primary and secondary level. For those that want a higher education, we also have the TELS and Toppers Programme that assist our children to achieve their education dreams.

All of these add up to build a workforce that is visionary, knowledgeable and a skilled workforce and such a workforce is attracting investment into our country. There are now investors coming here because of the quality of the workforce that we have. We have seen the growth of such sectors as the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and Call Centres that are being developed in our country. We hope to see more in Wairabetia when it is concluded.

Madam Speaker, in building a knowledgeable society, Government is also giving civil servants the chance to get a higher education or upgrading their qualifications. This is possible through the Civil Service Scholarship Scheme and the Post Graduate Scholarship Scheme. We are a Government that believes in involving everyone and leaving no one behind. In the words of Benjamin Franklin "Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember, involve me and I learn". Involvement is exactly what we are all about and what we aspire to become in our education reforms.

Madam Speaker, worker welfare and right is a priority in our work. Our Labour Standard Services has been allocated a budget of \$3.4 million to carry out this work and to ensure that decent work is a reality for Fijians and that social justice is delivered as it should. Effective enforcement and making sure that the law is complied with will be an ongoing work for our Labour Standards Services.

We have already recovered this year from non-complying employers (those are not paying but they are supposed to be paying) more than \$700,000 which has been paid to workers for the dues that were due to them. A total of 3,439 labour inspections were conducted from last year into this year. This is part of our proactive work which will continue in the new financial year.

Madam Speaker, \$5.3 million has been allocated for our National Occupational Health and Safety Services (NOHSS) to promote and enforce the law. Under this, we will continue to carry out the inspections, audits, trainings and awareness. We will look now into tightening our prosecution of non-complying employers to create a more effective enforcement tool. We will continue to review and formulate new OHS laws, such as Regulations dealing with plants, construction, noise, sawmill code and amusement rides code.

Work on our OHS reform will also continue so that the 'hiving off' of the National OHS Service to operate as an autonomous body is realised. We will also be looking into reorganising the NOHSS to include work that is relevant to achieving occupational health. These include; occupational health and

wellness and occupational rehabilitation for those who are injured in the workplace. All of these bring us one step closer to creating a safe and healthy workforce for Fiji.

Madam Speaker, this Government invests heavily in human resources and the welfare of workers and families in Fiji. From January next year, the Workers' Compensation Scheme will operate as a no-fault based scheme under the Accident Compensation Commission of Fiji (ACCF). With this change, we will have reached a remarkable milestone in giving our workers faster access to social justice.

Under the current scheme that we have, it has always been a struggle to pay workers what is due to them. We often end up in court to seek the payments that are due to a worker, who has been injured in the workplace and are lucky if we are able to make the payments while the employer's company is still in operation.

With a no-fault based schemes, it removes the employers' liability, shortens the timeframe to process compensation and there will always be an available fund to cater for the payments. There is no extra burden on employers and the scheme will even cater for school children who are hurt in the school yard.

With this change in the new year, we will still have an allocation of \$1.75 million to cater for compensation for Government workers. In terms of the current cases that we are dealing with under the fault-based scheme these will still be dealt with by our current Workers' Compensation Team.

Madam Speaker, the health and safety of workers at the workplace must always be paramount and protected. They must also be equally compensated for any injury, disease or incident at the workplace. A no-fault scheme will ensure a speedy process is in place to cater for all. I fully support the implementation of the no-fault workers compensation scheme which will bring much-needed relief to workers and their families.

This Budget continues our commitment in advancing worker welfare by increasing Maternity Leave, which has now be extended by another 14 days and this also ensures that we are in line with our international obligations on the Maternity Leave day requirement. We now meet those international requirements by international conventions with this extension.

Fathers now can apply for Paternity Leave to assist during the birth of their child. Not all countries recognise this important leave but here in Fiji, we can proudly add our name to those countries that ensure that fathers play a role in the early days of a child's life.

Under this Budget also, we have introduced for the first time, a Family Care Leave where families can go and look after things related to their families because we are a Government that puts your family first. This leave will allow workers to attend to their family, without affecting other leave entitlements.

We have also introduced for the first time, Family Insurance for all civil servants. This will ensure protection for workers and their families, especially for those who are working in the Civil Service.

Madam Speaker, we are indeed proud also that for the first time in our history, this Government has allocated a billion dollars towards the education sector. This initiative is important for us in our Ministry because it has helped us to tackle child labour. We have noted that with free and compulsory education programme, there has been a drastic reduction in child labour, and we are proud to say that we have successfully placed children back into school through programmes and assistance provided to our children.

Under our Budget allocation, we will continue to build a pathway to declaring Fiji a child labour free country. This is our goal which has been and will continue to be assisted through the Government education reforms and in initiatives.

Government has provided various programmes to ensure all Fijians have access to education through free tuition, bus fare assistance, free milk and Weetbix, Parenthood Assistance Payment, et cetera, and this will continue into the new year.

Madam Speaker, cordial relations between workers and employers are important in promoting good-faith employment relations, health and safety, productivity and social justice in the workplace.

Our Mediation Services supports this through timely and effective resolution of workplace disputes between employers and workers, and we have been allocated \$1.1 million to carry out this work.

Our Mediation Services will continue to provide all those services so that we can have social dialogue and consultation is something that we will continue to strive for in our Ministry.

Over and above that, Madam Speaker, I would just like to take out a few more minutes left, there is just two points that I think I wanted to focus on.

There has been a lot of talk about the fact that while this has been mentioned, the Budget itself is trying to focus on the family that it is not being based on the family. But the thing that I have mentioned right from the very outset, if you look at all the Budgets of the FijiFirst Government, there has been a consistency in what we have been doing over the first few years.

Now that we have this leave on extending Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, \$1,000 per child Family Care, that is just something that is a further extension to our focus of the family that has been placed ever since we came in to Parliament. Not just when FijiFirst took over leadership of the country, but when the Bainimarama-led Government was there.

I was just looking at the things that we have had in the past. When a rural mother becomes pregnant, Government is already giving them food vouchers to make sure that their child being created in the womb is being fed the right kind of food. That is a kind of thing we have been doing.

Now when the child is born, a person is given another \$500 when they are registered, to make sure they can buy the clothes for the child and look after the child. And then when they go to school, look at all the assistance that is there - primary school, secondary and tertiary, all that assistance will be put in place to look after the families.

Over and above that, this Government has been focussed on the needs of the most marginalised. No other Government has done this. People have talked about the National Minimum Wage being too low, but no other Government has put in the National Minimum Wage. We put it in as \$2, we raised it \$2.32, we raised it to \$2.60 and we will raise it again in the future.

But when you look at the impact of what Government does on the most marginalised, it is not just on National Minimum Wage, it is also on all the other assistances that we give. When we hired the Consultant to come and look at our National Minimum Wage, she found that poverty was reduced. The workers themselves said poverty for them was reduced by 70 percent by the impact of all of these social wages; the ones in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, all across Government.

The people of this country know that this Budget is for their families and for their future, and they know that the Government that will stand up for them will take them into the future, the future that is best for them will be the one that is being led by FijiFirst.

With those words, Madam Speaker, I think this might be the last session that we meet. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to serve in Parliament. Thank you to my fellow colleagues, Honourable Members on this side, as well as from the Opposition for the debates that we have had, for the comedy at certain times and the joy that we have had.

I can see that you are waiving. I hope that we might end up here again next year, and you can come and shake hands with me again here. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you very much, Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, we will now adjourn our proceedings to go for afternoon tea. We will resume at 5 o'clock.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.24 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 5.00 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will resume from where we left off and I now call upon the Honourable Anare Vadei to have the floor.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members of this august House and people listening and watching from the comfort of their homes; I rise as the last batsman on the Opposition bench to oppose the 2018-2019 Budget and I seek your indulgence to state the basis and reasons for our opposition to this Bill.

Before going any further, Madam Speaker, allow me to thank the Honourable Minister for Economy and his team for the compilation and presentation of this Budget. Let me also congratulate the Honourable Shadow Minister for Economy for his response.

At the outset, I must say that I fully support and endorse the response made by the Honourable Shadow Minister for Economy to the Budget Address.

They deserve our serious consideration, given one speaks about a land that exists only in utopia while another speaks on the ground of reality. This is a stark difference between a Government mesmerised in its own folktale and smokescreen curtain, and an Opposition using the sword of rational thinking and reasonably cutting down that curtain and masking the reality.

This is to enable the people of Fiji to have a fair view of the FijiFirst Party exposed on the floor of this House on the eve of the General Elections 2018. Their antics are catching up fast on them and even, they cannot save themselves now.

Fiji, Madam Speaker, is ready for a change and no forces on earth can deny us that opportunity now. This Government and this kind of budgeting just sums to the call for a 'protest vote' and nothing less, and I will demonstrate that in a minute or two on why and how.

Madam Speaker, Parliament is the highest court of the land and the Government which is accountable to Parliament is the servant of the people. Service to our people to empower them and to empower our families is a must, yet when we look at this Budget, families give more and receive little in return. It is an anti-people's Budget, aimed at committing a daylight robbery. They can shout on top of their voices that Fijian families matter but Fiji and all the Fijians know they do not care.

Firstly, when VAT was reduced to 9 percent, all the basic food items exempted from VAT was put under VAT. Secondly, if it was not enough, a 10 percent Environment Levy and another 6 percent STT was slapped upon the people of Fiji. So 9 percent VAT, plus 10 percent Environment Levy, plus 6 percent STT equals to 20 percent taxation, as opposed to the previous 15 percent VAT.

The truth of the matter, Madam Speaker, is that under the FijiFirst misrule, our taxes have increased, as well as more taxes, levies, indirect taxes and charges. It is worst-ever form of taxing our people as the saying goes, "Killing the goose that lays the golden eggs."

No citizen would like to live and work in this kind of tax environment and let me not mince my words to say that no business entity is worth its salt would opt to invest and do business in Fiji as our tax structure stands; a SODELPA government will review the tax structure in Fiji. We definitely cannot afford to let Fiji go down the drain, and our families to suffer in silence.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, a close analysis of the Budget reveals that one person controls more than three-quarters of the Budget. This is simply too draconian and making a mockery of the Financial Management Act. It is a very dangerous precedent set out with this kind of one-upmanship where it is the Honourable Minister for Economy and not the line Ministers, who will control large chunks of funds. It depicts their true style and version of democracy that is at brazen and unashamed display and yet, we are often being lectured here about transparency and teamwork. A SODELPA government will dismantle the element of one-upmanship in Cabinet and empower its Cabinet Ministers to have control over the funds related to their Ministries, Departments and all the bodies and entities that come under their ministerial responsibility.

It is a pity, Madam Speaker, to be a Cabinet Minister wearing a big leaf in public when you have wings clipped in terms of your control over your Ministerial budget. It makes the system of executive and responsible Government a laughing stock in and outside Parliament and I wonder where is the conscience of the Ministers who dwell to suffer and continue to hold ministerial berths under this kind of oppressive situations?

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, the basis of revenue of a Government is dependent on the health of its national economy. I think we have had more than enough of this old ballad of nine years of unprecedented economic growth in Fiji, where the quality of life and standard of living of our families remain the same or have gone worse. That growth is only reflected because we have become a consumption driven economy.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, let me ask the Government of the day, what new industries have they created in addition to those which existed prior to the military *coup* in 2006? None in fact.

The boom in the construction industry, Madam Speaker, is fuelled by the reconstruction works in the aftermath of the recent disasters and the severe regulation that has been imposed upon the overseas citizens owning land in Fiji, to develop the same within a specific time or dread the prospect of paying a higher penalty.

Over expenditure and the need to widen the scope of public poverty in the conduct of public affairs pertaining to ideas and principles of good governance; the primary issue in this regard, Madam Speaker, is political interference versus public administration. This leads me to ask the Government in the House on the following questions:

1. Are the management level civil servants appointed on merit or by the reason of their political opinion and affiliation?
2. Is their allegiance to serve the nation and its people or their political master?
3. How much of the time and resources they spend doing their work and how much of it is spent on strategizing and implementing the Qorvis propaganda?

Additionally, Madam Speaker, related issues to policymaking, implementation and review; we all appreciate this is not an easy area and every Government has attempted to do its best to uplift the lives of our families by various policies and programmes since our Independence in 1970. Yes, for the first time ever, we have a Government which has done nothing to our families apart from talking about them, thriving at their miseries by pie in the sky, promises and delivering little at a high cost.

Madam Speaker, what can be deduced from the speeches that have been made from both sides of the House in the course of the debate is that the FijiFirst Government is attempting and venturing on the path of making Fiji a socialist state which is next to communism, weakening our people to be dependent

on the State handouts while we in the Opposition advocate to lead Fiji on the path to empower our people and make Fiji free once again to restore robust democracy.

We cannot afford to become another Maldives or Vanuatu and Tonga where China is demanding land in return for non-payment of debt. We cannot afford to let go of our port like that of Colombo in Sri Lanka or end up like being Greece, a nation that was pushed to the brink of bankruptcy because of its grey and grim socialism required a bailout by way of international aids. In our case, even that aid would be impossible because we have frustrated our traditional partners to the extent that in the last 12 years the money which was supposed to be coming our way to Fiji is now going to other Pacific States.

The Opposition wishes to remind the Government of the day that its new friends such as China, Indonesia and the Arab world would abandon and desert it the moment they felt Fiji was used as a date place for them.

FijiFirst policies and programmes have failed Fiji and the Fijian people. Many of its policies and programmes and what was promised to the people of Fiji in the Elections Manifesto in 2014 contradicts each other. As it appears now, the Government is suffering from policy paralysis and has lost its plot as well as its vision and sense of direction. Its prime concern is not our families but the FijiFirst family whether it will survive in the electoral battle of 2018 or not.

Last but not least, Madam Speaker. I wish to speak on the Ministry of Health and Medical Services before I conclude. Like several other key ministries, the Minister for Economy controls \$45 million from the \$334 million budget allocation. Since the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services has failed to give the reason why that \$45 million needs to be controlled by the Honourable Minister for Economy, I now ask the same question to the Honourable Minister for Economy who still has the right of reply to answer this question while he takes the floor.

The Opposition has some grave reservations in relation to the affairs, activities and conduct of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services which are, that each year funds are allocated for the upgrading and development of the health and medical services infrastructure but it does not take off the ground. The allocations and assurances still remain in what seems to be a very long pipeline.

On kidney dialysis, Madam Speaker, it must be noted that last year in this House, the Opposition had mooted the idea by way of seeking an allocation for the same which was rejected by the Government majority. Nevertheless, it is good to see our ideas inspire and guide them in a situation where they appear to have run out of gas.

What is more important and needs to be done, Madam Speaker, is to improve the maternity service in our hospitals which are in a pathetic state belittling our health and medical facilities and taking the lives of our people – young and old alike.

The next one is straight out payment of the Workmen Compensation to the injured or dead which we welcome with reservations because it will only cover those claims made after 1st January, 2019 which means the claims that are pending will not benefit from this policy review.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government came into power promising the Free Medicine Scheme but the Scheme has failed to cater and serve all the Fijian people. I say this because basic medical supplies are not available in our hospitals. This is a pressing issue for Fiji right now as ever before.

Before concluding, a few words on the rising cases of NCDs, Madam Speaker. Fiji has one of the highest NCD cases in the Pacific and despite this issue being in existence for some time, the FijiFirst Government has not been able to come up with a plan to tackle the same and save lives.

On the other hand, Madam Speaker, we the Opposition accepted the verdict by the people and committed ourselves to hold the Government to account despite the limited information and scope of freedom available to us today. Fiji is ready to accept and embrace us to lead this nation to its freedom and to greater heights of prosperity because Fijian families know we care for them and they matter to us.

Madam Speaker, I join the Opposition in opposing the 2018-2019 Budget and I call upon all the Government Members who care for Fiji and Fijian families to oppose this Budget. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I now call upon the Honourable Samuela Vunivalu to take the floor.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, if you can allow me to quote from the *Bible* from the Book of I Peter, Chapter 2 Verse 17, which states and I quote: “Fear the God and Honour the Emperor” or *Rerevaka na Kalou ka doka na Tui*.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Leader of the Opposition, Members of Parliament and those listening from the comfort of their homes and around the world, good afternoon. My speech is a very short one as all the Honourable Members and Ministers have contributed well in regards to the best ever Budget since the Colonial days.

Madam Speaker, I rise to support the 2018-2019 Budget which was presented on 28th June, 2018 and I acknowledge and thank the Honourable Attorney General and Minister for Economy for presenting to this august House a Budget that will take Fiji forward especially to the benefit of our families, youth and the young generation in our country.

Madam Speaker, before I continue, I would like to say that my surname starts with “V” (Vunivalu) and every time, I would be the last to talk on the Budget debate and all that I wanted to say has already been mentioned by Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members.

Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to thank you for these four years. I went to London in my first year in Parliament with the Secretary-General on the Procedure of Parliament Seminar and we got to learn about the Speaker’s role. We also went (I think) with you, Madam Speaker, to Canberra and again we learnt more about the role of the Speaker. Sitting in this august House, the way you control the House, I acknowledge you, Madam Speaker.

HON. MEMBERS.- *Vinaka*.

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker, I also wish to acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, for supporting the Government of the day as she had praised the new initiatives as highlighted in the *Fiji Sun* and I quote; “Opposition Leader Ro Teimumu Kepa has praised some of the new initiatives addressed in the 2018-2019 Budget announced on 28th June, 2018.”

She acknowledged the new initiatives but on the same note, the Budget had to be funded somehow. We have heard all the good things that the Honourable Minister for Economy has put in the Budget, beginning from the newborn to the oldest member of the family. When you hear it, it all sounds very good.

Madam Speaker, even the Shadow Minister for Economy, Honourable Aseri Radrodro also mentioned in the *Fiji Sun* and I quote; “It was an interesting Budget especially with the new initiatives that had been addressed for the people of Fiji and I think the people of Fiji deserve it.” Madam Speaker, if the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is supporting the Budget, I can say that there is a conflict of interest.

(Laughter)

It looks like some Honourable Members of the Opposition are supporting another Opposition Leader, who knows? Madam Speaker, the preparation of their speeches is a huge waste of time and energy. They should follow their Leader and the Honourable Shadow Minister for Economy.

Madam Speaker, we, the Honourable Members of the Government do support our Leader, the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Minister for Economy, and that is the difference. It is very sad to see that Honourable Members of Opposition are not supporting the Honourable Leader and the Honourable Shadow Minister for Economy. Madam Speaker, I will urge the Opposition to, please, be loyal to your Leader and the Honourable Shadow Minister for Economy like us, the Government of the day, and that is why we are successful.

When I say “successful”, I mean that we will be successful again in the next General Elections where we will have extra seats as we have today, there are seven of us are here but in the next General Elections, it will double our number, altogether 14 (7 x 2). I think we will be in the front here - 1 to 7 so maybe there will celebrations and some of the SODELPA will not be here. I am sorry to say this.

(Laughter)

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to salute the Honourable Minister for Economy for the allocation in Head 19 (Programme 1, Activity 1-9) and Head 20 (Programme 1, Activity 1-9).

Madam Speaker, the Commander of the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces, Rear Admiral Viliame Naupoto applauds the RFMF allocation received in the 2018-2019 Budget which is \$103.3 million. He mentioned in the *Fiji Sun* while speaking at the QVS (Matavatuou) passing out parade, and I quote:

“By the increase in operating expenditure budget gave the RFMF the flexibility to carry out its work.”

Madam Speaker, the security forces provide support services to the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) and the Fiji Police Force and overseas international obligations that relate to the search and rescue, defensive, law and order. One of the primary responsibilities of the RFMF is to ensure peace and security of the nation.

Madam Speaker, in comparison to some big countries in the world, Fiji is a very small country but it makes significant contribution to the United Nations organisation where the RFMF serves in Sinai, Iraq, Lebanon and Golan Heights for peacekeeping operation.

Fiji has been known for its bravery and courageous reputation while serving in peacekeeping operations. In missions where other countries would not go, the Fijian went in. In missions where other countries left because it was too dangerous but the Fijian stays. Madam Speaker, this displays true comradeship and dedication to duty to overcome all odds.

Madam Speaker, one of the initiatives is the \$20,000 which is allocated to promote the function of Black Rock which was mentioned by the Honourable Minister of Defence in Nadi not only as a redeploying training centre but also as a Regional Humanitarian and Disaster Rehabilitation Centre. The camp is close to Nadi International Airport and the Military also monitors and provides security for the airport which is a gateway to the country.

Madam Speaker, the Fiji Military Forces is also equipped with some latest technologies and defence strategies to address emerging security threats, supporting the international community to reduce conflict and forge peaceful solutions. The Military's task requires intensive local and overseas trainings to better serve the people of our nation, and the allocation of \$4.5 million for the purchase of food and service to better equip and prepare RFMF personnel is commendable, thanks to the Government of the day.

Madam Speaker, Military personnel retire at the age of 55 every year, giving opportunities to our younger generation being recruited every year and this has vastly created job opportunities for men and women.

Madam Speaker, the welfare of the military is very important and the allocation of \$500,000 to renovate the quarters and barracks which requires maintenance renovations and upgrading works to comply with the OHS standards. Military wives need good accommodation and we should support them. At times, they perform dual roles as mother and father whilst their husbands are away on duty. That is, if they live in good quarters. It is not an easy task for the wives to stay away from their husbands for one year and I praise all the Military wives for their commitment and dedication.

Madam Speaker, all personnel in the nine Divisional Units within the RFMF are qualified infantry men, Madam Speaker. Head 19 Programme 1 Activity 1, Policy and Administration (\$17,598,000 for Activity 2 – LSU (Logistics Support Unit); Activity 3 – 3FIR; Activity 4 – RFMF Engineer; Activity 5 – Naval Division; Activity 6 – TFs (Territorial Forces); Activity 7 – FTG (Forces Training GRP); Activity 8 – LFC (Land Force Command); and Activity 9 – Hydrographic Unit.

Madam Speaker, all Military personnel need to be praised for their hard work.

The Fiji Police Force is allocated a total of \$193.5 million which is under Head 20 - Programme 1, Activity 1 to Activity 9. The Fiji Police Force is responsible for maintaining law and order and in the Fijian society by employing best practices in the police work and using modern technology and innovative strategies to prevent crime.

Madam Speaker, crimes are now more sophisticated and technological advances means crimes can be committed from one's home and executed in another part of the world. This is why we have to improve networking with other law enforcement agencies, so likewise training should be conducted according to the needs of the various divisions.

Madam Speaker, acting under the authority of the law, police officers may limit their rights of people who are suspected of committing a crime through arrest, detentions and investigations of crime, searches and other police activities. It is important for the police to know how far they can go in limiting rights of people when dealing with them.

Madam Speaker, as you know my career started in the police and later posted to the RFMF and I have been in the disciplined forces until I retired in 2014 and I joined politics in the same year. I support the recruitment of the special constabulary. They deserve to learn the police work from recruit to final recruit. At times, Special Constables attend to report but cannot interview any charges culprits.

Madam Speaker, Special Constables arrest criminals and handover to the police for the interview but they do provide statement and they order summon to give evidence in court.

Madam Speaker, some Special Constables have been serving 10 to 15 years but do not have much knowledge like the regular police officers.

Madam Speaker, the allocation to the Police distributed to all respective units such as Police Headquarters, CID National Intelligence Bureau, Southern Division, Eastern Division, Western Division, Northern Division and Police Special Response Unit.

Madam Speaker, the Forces engage in wide range of activities in maintaining professional, personal officers that are well-trained to handle criminals' threats.

Madam Speaker, on page 6 of the *Fiji Sun* dated 29th June, it says, and I quote:

“Top Cop praises initiative to regularise the appointment of Special Constables in the Budget 2018-2019 has been welcomed as mentioned by some of the Honourable Members yesterday by the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Sitiveni Qiliho was extremely thrilled and thanked the Government, on behalf of the Special Constables, working for the Police Forces for numbers of years.”

Madam Speaker, I salute the hard work of the Police in whatever organisation they are posted to doing police work.

Madam Speaker, when I talk about these two organisations, I am fully aware of what I am saying. It is a pity when the Honourable Parmod Chand was saying in our last sitting that there is no promotion in the police.

HON. P. CHAND.- (Inaudible)

HON. S.B. VUNIVALU.- That was what you said, Honourable Member.

Let me explain about the motto for the police which is written in Latin. “*Motto* is *Salus Populi, Supre remand Lapse.*” The meaning is a very short one, “The Welfare of the people is the highest law.” Nothing else, no promotion. Some police can be in the Police Force for 20 years as the PC but they think about the motto when they are told during recruitment.

Madam Speaker, during national disasters, nevertheless, if a policeman is on day-off or on leave, the motto will never come out of the policemen's head and mind. He has to move on. Some consciously keep this motto as a coat of arm. As for us in Fiji, our coat of arm is *Rerevaka na Kalou, Ka Doka na Tui* which is written in the Bible of 1 Peter: Chapter 2 Verse 17.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, I know that this is our last Budget debate before the next general elections. We have proved in the last General Elections that the FijiFirst captured 32 seats. We were all new, it was the first time that a new party called FijiFirst under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, Voreqe Bainimarama, and the people of this nation voted 32 seats in this Parliament. Now, we are known in Fiji and plenty voters who know us in villages, settlements, in the maritime areas; they do not know me and even the Honourable Members. They know us now. They have been moving around like in Nadroga.

We are well known now. We have worked tirelessly throughout Fiji and I strongly believe that we will create history in the next General Election and that the seven seats on this side will be doubled. I have mentioned this, so it is an honour for me to say “Thank you” to some Opposition Members. It is an honour for me to say this, as you will not be able to sit here next year because some of our FijiFirst Party members here will be sitting on that side of the House. I wish you good luck in your future endeavours.

Madam Speaker, I extend my full support for the 2018-2019 Budget and may God bless Fiji forever more. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Honourable Minister for Women, Children, Poverty Alleviation to take the floor.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Honourable Cabinet Ministers, the Honourable Leader of Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament; I rise to congratulate and applaud the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy and his strong team at the Ministry of Economy for the 2018-2019 Budget before this august House.

I wish to also thank my Permanent Secretary, Directors, Programme Managers and of course, the Assistant Minister, Honourable Veena Bhatnagar for working together with the Ministry of Economy to help us as a Ministry, yet again to seek the highest ever budget allocation for deserving Fijians since the inception of the Ministry.

I wish to also congratulate the Fijian Government for being able to successfully transition from a people's budget in 2017 to a family budget in 2018 which is especially for my Ministry, a highly important venture because many of the challenges faced by our clientele would be addressed if family was the focus of all leaders and institutions of this country.

This Budget seeks to build upon what the previous budgets of this Government have laid the platform for. For the Budget before this august House my Ministry has received \$133 million. This is a total increase of \$19.6 million from the last budget allocation. For us at the Ministry and the very important clientele that we serve this Budget is not only a family budget. It is an empowering budget, it is the mother of all budgets. Mother because it cares and it nurtures.

Madam Speaker, I would like to comment on what the Honourable Minister for Agriculture has already stated in relation to this highly elusive letter R. In the current financial year, my Ministry was allocated \$99.8 million which was held under 'R'. To-date and in accordance with the plan of the Ministry and in accordance with requests to the Ministry of Economy, we have spent up to 90.4 percent of this Budget that is under 'R'.

Money that is under 'R', Madam Speaker, as highlighted by the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, it entails the requirement of transparency and good governance. It entails the requirement of fulfilling the constitutional mandate upon Government to ensure the taxpayers funds are used efficiently, effectively and with the highest standards of integrity.

Madam Speaker, my Assistant Minister has articulated very well the budget allocations for the various programmes under my Ministry. I will focus more on a few key items in our budget and an overarching perspective on poverty alleviation measures across of Government and raising the standard of living of fellow Fijians through this Budget.

I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for Economy, Madam Speaker, for the first ever paternity leave for new fathers in the history of our country. That policy change, Madam Speaker, speaks volumes of the FijiFirst Government's enlightened leadership through the Honourable Prime Minister. A leadership that is cognizant of the role of women in the unpaid care economy and the need to share that role with their male partners.

A leadership that has taken leaps and bounds towards our national aim for gender equality. To incentivise the promotion of taking paternity leave, employers will be given 150 percent tax deduction for paying employees on paternity leave. The same concession is given to employers who pay their employees during Family care Leave.

To fortify this, a further 14 days for maternity leave to make it a total of 98 days is recognition of a new babies unique needs and the critical maternal role at that stage which would form the basis of every child's physical, emotional and psychological development through later years. And when we care about our children from birth, we are caring about the future of our nation.

An Honourable Opposition Member yesterday criticised the \$1,000 Parental Assistance Allowance for newborn babies. In its place, it has been suggested that the Child Allowance for the purposes of calculating taxable income be increased. With this criticism, what this criticism fails to realise is that the Parental Assistance Allowance of \$1,000 per baby is targeted at those having a household income below the income tax threshold of \$30,000. It is for babies born into families with a household income of less than \$30,000. It is targeted assistance for those who need it the most, those below the tax threshold, which includes those who do not have any income source at all.

That is what this Government does, Madam Speaker. It empowers those below a certain income threshold and those who have no income at all. Those people feature prominently in this Family Budget, simply because this Government cares and it nurtures, and this Government will continue to do all that it can do to get them to enjoy the same things that the more privileged enjoy in this country. Perhaps, free medicine for those earning less than \$20,000, access to legal aid for those earning than \$15,000, access to *Walesi* boxes, subsidised electricity charges, subsidised water charges, subsidised kidney dialysis costs for those earning less than \$30,000, first home purchase programme for those earning a combined income of \$50,000 or less, subsidies for FDB agricultural loans below \$50,000, free education for all, access to tertiary education through TELS, writing-off Housing Authority home loans upon fulfilment of pre-requisites and the list goes on, Madam Speaker.

We have heard a lot about that from this side of the House, so Madam Speaker, the Opposition can call this Budget "an election budget", or "a sugar-coated budget" or a "I love me budget," or "a pre-election bribe" or whatever other name they wish to call it. The bottom line, Madam Speaker, is that this Government will continue to give such a budget to the Fijian people because that is what we swore to do when we took up office because that is what the Fijian people deserve. They have been neglected for too long by other governments. This is not a one-off story we are telling through this Budget, Madam Speaker. It is a consistent story with a consistent theme. We swore to uphold the Constitution of our Republic which in turn makes unprecedented promises for the socio-economic rights for the Fijian people.

Through the successive national budgets of the FijiFirst Government, we continue to take reasonable steps within available resources to achieve the progressive realisation amongst other things, of the right of every person to have reasonable access to free education, to economic participation, to work and a just minimum wage, to transportation, to housing and sanitation, to adequate food and water, to social security measures, to social security measures, to health and for the special rights of children and persons living with disabilities.

Every item in this Budget, Madam Speaker, is geared towards improved livelihoods, poverty alleviation and an empowered Fijian population in the years to come. Whether it be through investment infrastructure, education, ICT, health, agriculture, social protection, water and energy. Whatever sector it is, the aim is to empower, to raise living standards and to alleviate poverty where it exists. No one who has emotional intelligence and intellectual honesty could ever say anything negative about such a noble aim delivered through this Budget.

Madam Speaker, the other side has this aversion to Ministers getting down on the ground and connecting with ordinary Fijians. That aversion stems from a history of leadership in Government outside of the Bainimarama and the FijiFirst Government, who are elitist in their approach to leadership of the Fijian people. They are unreachable and inaccessible to the Fijian community. So the picture of Ministers

hanging out with Fijian people in their local communities is so hard to stomach. It is a strange picture to them. My message to the other side is simple and very clear. Get used to that picture because that is how this side of the House rolls. Our leader leads with his feet firmly on the ground, listening to the Fijian people. We take our cue from him and we follow suit. I would advise the Opposition to take their cue from their leader inside the House and also praise this Budget for it is full of good things for the Fijian people.

Madam Speaker, when has any other government ever rolled out insurance for those under the social protection net? Never in the history of this country has any government being bothered so much about those who have so little. Giving them the means to take themselves out of poverty and to improving their livelihoods and that of their families. And the evidence is there for all to see, Madam Speaker. The rate of poverty nationally, declined from 35 percent in 2002-2003 to 31 percent in 2008-2009 and further declined to 28.1 percent in 2013 – 2014. That is statistics from the respective household income and expenditure survey Madam Speaker.

The Child Protection Allowance is a monthly allowance for children from low-income families, single parent families and prisoner dependents. Monthly allowances are also allocated for children under the care of Residential Homes. In the current fiscal year, we have a total of 5,531 families benefitting from this programme. We welcome the new budget of \$9.3 million to further assist families cater for the basic needs of their children. Madam Speaker, \$1.2 million has also been allocated to the Child Protection programme and we will continue promoting the rights of Fijian children, especially for their protection from abuse and neglect, developing life skill education, and reviewing laws affecting children.

I must also commend UNICEF for the allocated budget of \$153,910 towards the rolling work plan for 2018 – 2019 to complement national efforts towards the protection and empowerment of children. Madam Speaker, \$300,000 has been allocated to implement the Community Work Act and prepare us for the implementation of the Community Based Corrections Act 2018. This Act empowers the judiciary to order community work instead of imprisonment in deserving cases. The Act recognises that offenders can be rehabilitated and when we think of Juveniles who have fallen on the wrong side of the law, such a law will go a long way in bringing them back into the fold. An allocation of \$50,000 has also been received to acquire land to construct the Fiji Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre for 2018 – 2019.

Madam Speaker, it was once said that the moral test of any Government is now it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the disabled. One of our largest increases in the 2018 – 2019 budget stems from the allocation of \$2 million for the upgrade of the three state homes for the elderly. This allocation will go a long way in making the lives of the 140 residents in the 3 state homes more comfortable in the coming years. To complement this, a further \$50,000 for the procurement of special care equipment has been allocated for our senior citizens in these homes.

Madam Speaker, Fiji as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with disabilities (UNCRPD) has an obligation to implement the provisions of the Convention locally, leading to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2018. In order to implement this Act, we have been allocated \$100,000.00 in the fiscal year 2018 – 2019 for the review of our national policy to align it to the new Act and capacity building in communities and internally within the Ministry in these regards.

A further allocation of \$1.1 million in the new fiscal year will help empower local organisations deliver the needs-specific services and programs which they currently do for persons living with disabilities. The Allowance for Persons with Disability programme was introduced last year and targets those persons who are living with 100 percent permanent disabilities has seen 2,597 Fijians with disabilities being assisted and we welcome the allocation of \$6.8 million in this regards.

The Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons, now known as National Council for Persons with Disabilities has received an allocation of \$1 million as an operating grant to further strengthen the Council's capacity to implement the Rights of Person with Disabilities Act 2018. We have made a pledge to empower Fijians living with disabilities to be self-reliant and this the basis of the new programme known as the Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for which \$100,000.00 has been allocated. A further allocation of \$500,000 in this Budget is geared towards the retrofitting of homes to make it more inclusive and comfortable for persons living with disabilities and their families. I mean what other Government has ever bothered to look into retrofitting a home to suit those Fijians living with disabilities? None!

Madam Speaker, as a Ministry, a key strategy has been strengthening our ties with our partners to achieve the goals of the Ministry and the Fijian Government's pledge to leave no one behind. A new allocation of \$200,000 has been allocated as a grant to the Homes of Hope which will enable them to continue running their programmes for the 30 young women and girls, who have been victimised by sexual exploitation, helping them make a fresh start in life in their mothering, emotional wellbeing and financial independence. Parallel to this will be awareness and capacity building within the women's communities to make changes for prevention and protection.

Homes of Hope is a not-for-profit organisation working with young women and children, who are victims or vulnerable to situations of forced sexual encounters, sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse and violence.

An increase in the budget for grants to women's institutions will see the inclusion of Alamanah Hope Centre in Teidamu Lautoka, which runs skills training for widows in rural communities, building their capacities to fend for themselves.

Madam Speaker, it is also safe to say that this is also a gender-friendly Budget with the National Women's Machinery being allocated the highest budget in all its existence to implement the goals of CEDAW which Fiji ratified in 1995 - \$7.39 million, Madam Speaker. Obviously, investing in our women is smart economics and as my PS says, we have a lot to give to this country through the efforts of our women.

We are still riding high from the earnings of the 4th National Women's Expo, and I am extremely proud of our rural women artisans. They have made the event a brand in itself and with minimal marketing, minimal sponsorship and only 340 exhibitors, this year's sales was over \$430,000 for the three days. And when we add their takings from the Divisional Craft Shows leading up to the Expo, the total sum adds up to \$556,000, Madam Speaker. We have been given another \$500,000 to stage the Expo again in the coming year.

Madam Speaker, our women are ready to have a sustainable market for their products and we will continue to work towards that aid in the new financial year.

The Women's Plan of Action has been allocated \$1.1 million in the new fiscal year, as we plan to expand on the current activities and progress policy work under the five thematic areas of the Women's Plan of Action.

The Fiji Women's Federation has been allocated \$90,000 and we aim to reinforce our ties with women's NGOs to replicate the likes of the Ba Women's Forum in all districts, and to have more consultative forums with Fiji women's NGOs, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organisations.

Madam Speaker, the allocated Domestic Violence Support budget of \$100,000 will ensure that preliminary work and consultations with relevant stakeholders is carried out for the establishment of a

Domestic Violence Support Fund in the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year. The fund will provide for an allowance to unemployed victims, who have no financial support system and who have taken out a Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) against the employed perpetrators who normally provides for the victim's wellbeing.

A recent study by the Fiji Women Crisis Centre reveals that 49 percent of women never left violent relationships because they were not able to support their children.

Madam Speaker, the biggest raise in the budget of the Department for Women comes from the allocation of \$2.5 million towards the construction of the Barefoot College of Fiji. Because of its potential to spur economic independence and social mobility, solar energy has a unique intersection with SDG 5 which addresses the empowerment of women and girls.

The Barefoot College of Fiji, Madam Speaker, is a unique platform for women, particularly rural women to build their capacities for the green industry. That is what this Government does, Madam Speaker, it does not only live in the 'now', we prepare for the future whilst empowering Fijians in the now.

The empowerment of women done through this Government, Madam Speaker, is crosscutting. It is done through specific women empowerment programmes in other Ministries as well, like the Cottage Industry budget with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Industry and Trade which has helped 2,169 women up until January 2017 in the Small Business Grant.

Madam Speaker, with great budgets come greater responsibility on us as a Ministry, to ensure that the well-intentioned, responsible and empowering Budget delivered by the Honourable Minister for Economy is implemented with efficiency so that the targeted beneficiaries do receive what the FijiFirst Government has meant for them.

To complement this aim, 47 of our project positions had been regularised through this budget. A budget such as this needs hearts to go with its implementation through service delivery. And with the emotional intelligence of my Permanent Secretary, I have no doubt that the young and resilient team at the Ministry will go out in full force in the new fiscal year to do justice with the aim of uplifting families through this Budget.

I fully support this Budget, Madam Speaker, and I thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Members, given that there are two days of debate in this Budget, day time going on to the night with each Honourable Member given 20 minutes to be heard on your views of the Budget, there have been a lot of questions that need to be replied to and, therefore, I am giving the Honourable Minister for Economy extra time for his Right of Reply.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy to speak in reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I stand this evening to give this response with a particular sense of melancholy. The reason why I am melancholic, Madam Speaker, is because this, as many Honourable Members have highlighted, would be the last time that we will have a Budget delivered and perhaps, even the last time we may meet in this Parliament. We do not know when the Elections will be held, but it needs to be held (at least) by mid of November.

Madam Speaker, when we have the Parliament set out through the 2013 Constitution and perhaps, I in my naivety thought that when Parliament would get elected and Parliament would meet, that this would be a fantastic forum for us to be able to discuss new ideas, have input of new ideas to be able to discuss how we can take our country forward with a young population. Let us see what all of us in this Parliament could do.

But Madam Speaker, it did not happen. It did not happen because of the Opposition's attitude. It did not happen because they did not portray or indeed, display the sense of patriotism and nationalism which is very critical, Madam Speaker, to take our country forward.

We have had, Madam Speaker, racism in Parliament. We have had all sorts of lies being portrayed in Parliament. We have obfuscation of facts and figures, Madam Speaker, and that has been the characteristic for the past four years.

And, Madam Speaker, it is with great melancholy that I stand here to speak, in fact, I do not even feel like speaking, given the quality of the submissions from the other side.

Madam Speaker, I want to respond to some issues and I thank you for that. I would have probably prepared more notes, if I knew I would be given more time but thank you, Madam Speaker, for that.

Madam Speaker, I would like to start off with the comments made by the Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki. He started by God, he said that we are Godless, that is what he is trying to imply because this Constitution does not refer to God.

Madam Speaker, Section 22 of the Constitution says and I must read this, I quote:

- “(1) Every person has the right to freedom of religion, conscience and belief.
- (2) Every person has the right, either individually or in community with others, in private or in public, to manifest and practice their religion or belief in worship, observance, practice or teaching.
- (3) Every person has the right not to be compelled to —
 - (a) act in any manner that is contrary to the person's religion or belief; or
 - (b) take an oath, or take an oath in a manner, that—
 - (i) is contrary to the person's religion or belief; or
 - (ii) requires the person to express a belief that the person does not hold.”

It goes on to say that:

- “(4) Every religious community or denomination, and every cultural or social community, has the right to establish, maintain and manage places of education whether or not it receives financial assistance from the State,…”

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki debunked the entire process saying; “because we are all going with no moral compass, there is no God.” Madam Speaker, by mentioning God in your Constitution does not mean that God has left us.

God is within us. I firmly believe that, Madam Speaker, and everyone must believe that. Every night when we go home and when we go to pray, we all pray to God. It is not written anywhere but we do pray to God.

Madam Speaker, I can also highlight, when we have God mentioned in the previous Constitutions, that shenanigans took place too. Madam Speaker, we had such a high crime rate, we did not have the Yellow Ribbon Programme. Nightclubs were closed supposedly for the Sabbath or closed earlier so people would go to church but guess what happened? Certain nightclubs were open because they bribe the police officers.

Certain MPs used to go to those nightclubs themselves, who would stand up in Parliament, pontificate about the Sabbath but they were the ones attending that. We had bootleggers open at night. That is the level of hypocrisy that took place, Madam Speaker, and that unfortunately, is a hypocrisy that is taking place on the other side again.

Madam Speaker, we heard people talking about families, about the leadership of the SVT, about some of the Minister of SDL broke their marriage vows every night or probably on a weekly basis; this is the level of hypocrisy, Madam Speaker.

They talked about equal citizenry but there is blatant racism practised, Madam Speaker, administering in political level. Jobs, promotions, et cetera, were done on racial basis.

We have quota systems, Madam Speaker. Certain jobs were taboo for certain ethnic groups. They talked about separation of powers, Madam Speaker, but at the same time, they were trying to compromise the independence of the Judiciary through certain laws that were brought in Parliament, and we know what those laws are.

Certain law firms, Madam Speaker, which some of them are using now have primacy to access which judges were going to hear their cases. That was the practice, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, they talked about protecting indigenous rights. They said that indigenous rights were protected under the 1990 and 1997 Constitutions, but guess what, Madam Speaker? Under both those Constitutions, under supposedly a leadership of indigenous leadership land was permanently alienated.

We heard yesterday Honourable Ratu Lalabalavu saying, "Once, I did it illegally. Yes, he did it illegally. No one ever said that he did it illegally, but the law was flawed.

A few decades ago it was illegal in America to get a white and black person to be married, does it make it right, therefore? Is morally right? Is it ethnically right? What he did, was it morally and ethnically right?

No, it was not. Just because it was within the law, the law was flawed. And when they go back to that Constitution. They want to go back to that leader who had actually allowed it to happen.

Madam Speaker, we heard people pontificating about homosexuality being wrong. We should not have homosexuality, in fact, there was a law against homosexuality and a lot of them practice homosexuality. But during that day, they went and pontificated against it. That was a hypocrisy, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we have retirement age reduced from 60 to 55 years old, guess by who? Sitiveni Rabuka! They did not mention that. It was Mr. Qarase who increased it to 60. They did not mention that,

Madam Speaker. I am highlighting all these issues because it highlights the fact, that the contribution that they have made actually is bereft, Madam Speaker, bereft of credibility.

Madam Speaker, when we had announced the new name Ministry of Economy, unfortunately the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in the House over here in Parliament, started listing the names of all the Muslim countries that have Ministry of Economy. She forgot to mention Israel which they always talk about. She forgot to mention Cook Islands, many other non-Muslim countries that have Ministry of Economy.

We had another Member of Parliament who is no longer with us, who started listing names of all those Muslims who are employed in Government. We could have done a list of names, all the people who are non-Muslims, the iTaukeis, those who are Hindus, the people who are Madrasi, the Punjabis, we could have done all that, but we did not do that. That is the level of contribution, Madam Speaker, that they make. Of course, Madam Speaker, in all of these, NFP have remained definitely quiet.

Again, Madam Speaker, when we stood up in Parliament and talked about the detrimental effects of the 1987 *coup*, the financial debacle that followed after the NBF saga, they defiantly remained dumb about it. The only thing that the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad said that he does not support *coups*.

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

HON. SPEAKER. Point of Order.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I think the Honourable Attorney-General is making an accusation which is entirely incorrect.

Madam Speaker, we all know the Party's position on the 1987 Coup and 2000 Coup, on the position of racism and so for the Honourable Attorney-General to come out and keep accusing the National Federation Party of supporting that kind of view, I think is repugnant and I think he should stop that because it is a direct accusation to the Party and we are saying that, that is irrelevant and it is a pack of lies. He should stop that, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, he should withdraw that.

HON. SPEAKER. –Honourable Member, in your Point of Order, you are referring to the content of the speech made by the Honourable Minister for Economy, and that does not qualify under the Point of Order process. Therefore, I rule your Point of Order out of order.

Honourable Minister, please continue

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, if the Honourable Leader of NFP listened to me, I said the only thing he said, is they do not support *coups*, he did say that in Parliament. But he never said anything else after that, that is my point. They may say these things outside but in this Parliament, they never objected to whether it was said over here, never! They never stood up and said that. Yet again he did not comment on the NBF debacle. Madam Speaker, I, in fact harassed Honourable Professor Biman Prasad about Professor Anirudh Singh. He only talked about Brij Lal. Madam Speaker, why?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Speaker, point of order again. Let me seek clarification from you on this issue. The Honourable Attorney-General made references to Dr. Anirudh Singh, Dr. Som Prakash and I have said this before, when he talks about me not standing up, I do not have that kind of time and space that he has to the right of response.

There are issues that I have said, but for him to continue to accuse the National Federation Party and me of condoning things like Dr. Anirudh Singh's torture. Madam Speaker, I was the President of the Fiji Youth and Students League which actually mounted nationwide protest against the torture of Dr. Anirudh Singh and Honourable Dr. Mahendra Reddy sitting there knows that. He was part of Fiji Youth and Students League. I think, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Attorney- General should stop accusing me and the National Federation Party because we have always opposed any *coups*, any form of racism and any form of torture or harassment of people on the basis of race or religion or colour. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister for Economy I beg your indulgence but some issues that have been mentioned I would like to ask you to take that into consideration otherwise this is going to be brought up over and over again in your presentation. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I am simply commenting on the comments that were being made on the floor of Parliament. And I have said and this is factually correct, the *Daily Hansard* can be checked, that whenever these things have been mentioned, they have not said anything at all.

The point being, Madam Speaker, which is what this is leading up to is that, there is not just intellectual dishonesty but there is an absence of stating the facts and a hesitation to actually mention what is correct. That is the point that I am trying to drive at, Madam Speaker, and if I could just complete that.

The reason why he is saying that, he always has highlighted, only until today when we actually harassed him to do so, he only talks about Brij Lal. If it is Brij Lal perhaps he thinks will increase his political fortunes. The theory behind all of these, Madam Speaker, is that there is selective use of information. That is the main point, Madam Speaker.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, the reason why he is reacting to it, because he knows it is a fact.

Madam Speaker, what the NFP also failed to mention and they have never said this, never in the four years have said this, that the actual drop of sugar cane farmers from 20,000 to 12,000 farmers in 2006 was a direct result of the non-renewal of leases under the SVT and the SDL Governments. They have never acknowledged it. He talks about it, Madam Speaker. The reality is that they want to publicly criticise these two parties and that is why, Madam Speaker, because obviously they are cuddling up to them and they want to probably get into bed with them later on.

Madam Speaker, I want to highlight this to demonstrate that everything that the Opposition and their analysis in the contribution lacks merit. It lacks credibility and therefore the analysis of the budget is simply driven by political machinations and considerations. How can we object to a budget that allows increasing maternity leave? How can we object to a budget that allows an introduction of paternity leave? How can we object to a budget, Madam Speaker, that inculcates the culture of savings and giving \$1,000 for babies. Madam Speaker, how can you object as the Honourable Usamate very eloquently stated about the merit of having Workers Compensation put under ACCF.

Madam Speaker, this is the point that they have come to this debate without any evidence based on empirical evidence, no facts. They had in fact completely missed out mentioning a number of people who have actually talked highly about the economy. But their contribution in the past couple of days has been predominantly personalised, implicitly or directly racialised. Implicitly or indirectly, racial chauvinism is coming to it too, Madam Speaker.

Honourable Nawaikula, Madam Speaker, bothers me. He makes ridiculous comments, lies and harps on how he is lost because of the laws. He calls it Decrees, he refuses to accept the fact that it is a law. It is an Act and this again a defiance, is a particular quality of standard that has been dropped. It has dropped. The quality of contribution has dropped. He has brought disrepute.

Now, Madam Speaker, when he does all of that and everyone has a bit of laugh, I actually look around him, I see Honourable Gavoka, Honourable Leawere, Honourable Salote Radrodro, Honourable Vadei all sitting around and clap and laugh. All of them. I worry about it, Madam Speaker. I worry not just about this mob mentality and their support of intellectual absence, but I worry about what lies and nonsense they must be feeding the public outside this Parliament. I shudder to even think about what would happen if these people were ever in Government - God forbid, God forbid.

I shudder to think about what would happen to our children. What would happen to our future and indeed, what would happen to our economy? They would give away this land and they give away that without any financial acumen, without any financial analysis – Oh, we will give this away. Oh, we will do this. Let us have a linear development to economy. Oh, you cannot actually build that building because you have to do this first. *Areh!* You can do it altogether. That is the point. They do not have an understanding of 'realistically', Madam Speaker, financial integrity and how to run an economy.

We had Honourable Salote Radrodro, when I was actually giving my Budget Address, she said, "how can you have operating surplus when you have debt?"

(Laughter)

I mean this is again Finance 101, Madam Speaker.

(Inaudible interjection)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Please, check your *Daily Hansard*.

Madam Speaker, they have been bereft of ideas, bereft of display of intellectual input, bereft of the vision, bereft of concern for ordinary Fijians and bereft of true patriotism and true nationalism.

I can actually die for my country, Madam Speaker, I really believe that and I can do that because I am here not to fill my pocket, I am not here to further any social status. Madam Speaker, I can do much better outside but I am here because I have a commitment and I believe in the leadership of our Honourable Prime Minister. I am not here to further, Madam Speaker...

HON. MEMBER.- The other side?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, they are not here, I am talking about people who are here.

Madam Speaker, we are not here to further our own personal agendas nor some racial agenda or ethnic agenda or provincial agenda or religious agenda. We are here because we are concerned about our country as the theme of this Budget says, "We are concerned about Fijian families."

Madam Speaker, I would like to say that the Honourable Shadow Minister for Economy, I actually did feel sorry for him because his thunder was stolen away by his leader who is outside, who decided to do his own analysis report on the budget on video, on *YouTube*. He did it a couple of days before that. He stole his thunder. Completely unheard of, Madam Speaker. Even when the Honourable Leader, Ro Teimumu Kepa used to run the Party and Honourable Prasad was the spokesperson for the Opposition and Shadow Ministry for Economy, she never did that because that is his job. Now, his job

has been taken away by someone else. So I actually kind of felt a bit sorry for him, so I will not be very harsh on him.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, but the facts are crystal clear. We are enjoying our longest period of economic growth in Fiji, nine consecutive years of growth never experienced in Fiji's history before. I know that the Honourable Member may have been a bit shaken up by what had happened on *YouTube*, he so talked about let us breed horses instead goats. I mean, you know, Madam Speaker it is not even worth responding to.

(Laughter)

We do not eat horses. We ride horses, Madam Speaker. At least in Fiji, we do not eat horses. Madam Speaker, we have delivered this impressive growth performance during a period when we were struck with devastating natural disasters like *TC Winston* and the recent back-to-back cyclones and massive floods. Madam Speaker, this economic feat could only be delivered by the FijiFirst Government.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Radrodro goes on to say that these nine years of consecutive growth is delusional and claims that under the current SODELPA leader, the average growth rate was 4.2 percent. Madam Speaker, that is hypocritical as clarified by the Honourable Prime Minister, the average growth under the Rabuka Government was not 4.2 percent but in fact only 2.3 percent.

However, the leader of SODELPA quickly issued a press statement yesterday evening again on *YouTube* that continued to mislead the public by saying that growth in 1995 was 4.5 percent when the actual growth was only 2.5 percent; another gross misrepresentation, Madam Speaker. As we have said before, they can blatantly lie in Parliament, Madam Speaker, imagine what they are saying outside.

Madam Speaker, the outside Leader of SODELPA also wants to take credit for the 8.7 percent growth in 1999 when his SVT Government lost elections. How can you take credit for growth in the economy when SVT was not even in Government for most part of that year?

Similarly Madam Speaker, he has also taken credit for growth in 1992 when he was only elected mid-year. In fact, Madam Speaker, his press statement last night was riddled with untruths and his Shadow Minister proclaims the same thing earlier in Parliament. The reality, Madam Speaker is this, Fiji saw its largest economic contraction of 6.4 percent when Sitiveni Rabuka staged his first *coup* and then, of course, in May, his second *coup* is September 1987. Confidence in the economy plummeted and many Fijians fled their homeland. The brain drain and loss that resulted from the massive exodus left a huge vacuum that has taken us years to rebuild.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government's track record of the economy is very clear. At Independence, Madam Speaker our GDP stood at around \$0.2 billion and it took almost 40 years for Fiji's GDP to reach \$5.5 billion. That is a fact, it can be verified. However, Madam Speaker, it took FijiFirst just ten years to double this to around \$11 billion. It was under the Prime Minister Bainimarama's leadership, Madam Speaker, that Fiji gradually to become an upper middle-income country. Anyone can verify this, but of course, the Opposition will not accept the truth because it plucks things out of the air.

This is how, Madam Speaker, we have traded around 43,000 jobs and brought unemployment to a 20 year low of 4.5 percent, yet again the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in Parliament chose to refer to data and statistics claiming unemployment to be 6.3 percent. out of sheer ignorance, Madam Speaker! It is, in fact, outdated statistics which she was using, maybe the people who wrote the speech

for her decided to use that. The economy under the FijiFirst Government is right, Madam Speaker, and Fijians can attest to this. That is how we managed to almost triple our tax revenues and undertake bold strategic investments in modernising our roads, expanding access to water and electricity to be able to introduce numerous social welfare programmes including the \$100 social pension allowance and the \$90 disability allowance.

The Honourable Minister for Social Welfare spoke a lot about this matter. That is how we were able to invest a billion dollars in Education. That is how we manage to find new innovative ideas that have lifted the standard of living of Fijian families.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Radrodro spoke at length about traffic congestion, but it is such an irony for the Opposition to say this as many of them now have ownership of their own cars under the FijiFirst Government. I would not be surprised if some of them have more than one car.

Madam Speaker, but what we are proposing is a very elitist attitude. I want to give a small story. I have a driver, Saki, who has been driving for me for nearly seven to eight years. He has a family of five. He wanted to own a car, that is his ambition. He wants to be able to drive his children down to Deuba on a weekend to start off. He has never taken his family around Viti Levu and guess what, he bought his first car. He is able to take them around Viti Levu. What a great experience for his family!

He does not drive his car everywhere. Madam Speaker, to say because of this traffic congestion is taking place and, therefore, we should restrict the number of cars on the road is very elitist. But, Madam Speaker, what really should be spoken about is how we are going to solve the traffic congestion.

We have already mentioned in this Parliament, Madam Speaker, for example the real traffic congestion takes place between Nausori and Suva. Now we are doing a four-lane road. We have also said in Parliament, we will have bus lanes and encourage people to take buses, duty has been reduced on buses to encourage new buses because most people do not work as lawyers, accountants and various other jobs, they want to catch a bus.

We have to make buses more attractive. People do not want to sit in a bus with tarpaulin on it, they like proper windows. So quality buses need to be improved, we need dedicated bus lanes, have parking bays for people to come, so for example, if I live in Davuilevu, I will come to the main road, there is an area for me to park, jump on the bus, get to work in 20 minutes, back to my car in 20 minutes and then I get back to driving my car. That is what happens overseas. That is the plan, that is what we are doing, Madam Speaker.

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, let me highlight also that the Shadow Minister for Economy was absolutely correct to highlight the significant cost of political instability. It was under the current SODELPA leader's Prime Ministership that Fiji lost the National Bank of Fiji, something he tries to duck and

Madam Speaker, let me quote what the late Savenaca Siwatibau, a highly respected and esteemed economist and former Governor of Reserve Bank of Fiji said on the NBF issue, and I quote:

“The new management installed after the 1987 Military *coups* did not have the depth and the breadth required to run a bank. Government's effort to muzzle the media and its refusal to launch a Commission of Inquiry into the litany of abuse which resulted in the collapse of the then NBF is a serious indictment of the sorry-state of governance in the public sector in the country.”

He continues, Madam Speaker, and I quote:

“For the nationals and residents of Fiji, the cost and burden of the scandal which now they collectively bear is enormous. By the time this amount is repaid in full, the taxpayers of Fiji will have paid over \$300 million then.”

That was more than 10 years ago, Madam Speaker, and the cost today is twice that.

He said, Madam Speaker, and I quote again:

“The transfers to the NBF ballooned the government budget deficit and escalated the level of domestic public debt. Creative debt manoeuvre was then employed to bring down the debt level. Government sold part of its holdings in the ATH to the FNPF at a price much higher than the offer by external tenders. So effectively the burden of the cost of the NBF scandal were shifted onto members of the FNPF.”

These people, Madam Speaker, talked against the reforms of the FNPF.

Madam Speaker, for the past 20 years under the SVT Government and the SDL Government, the World Bank and other international organisations have been telling me to reform FNPF, otherwise the moneys will finish by 2052. There were people getting paid 24 percent return, 19 percent return, 15 percent return and most of the people were the elites which you are probably speaking for, Madam Speaker. There are many low income people, our young people, if we continue down the path of FNPF, when they retire there would have been no money; 2052 - no money.

That is why the reforms were carried out, and they come in here to this Parliament, Madam Speaker, and speaking for a few 100 people, forgetting about the other 400,000 FNPF members. The very nature of superannuation fund pulling, is you have a shared risk, you do not have others benefiting more than those who are not.

Madam Speaker, under the reform, of course, I want to highlight that there are some pensions prior to reforms who gained \$5 a month, \$10 a month, now no one receives less than a \$100 a month.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition lately ignored this when they spoke about debt. They lamented government debt but we are only borrowing for capital spending, Madam Speaker, where as an astronomical amount of public funds have been chewed up in the single largest financial scandal that we are still paying for today.

The fact is, almost a billion dollars have been spent on the NBF disaster. We are still repaying the interest on this, Madam Speaker, and this will continue for generations. This is the most disastrous mishandling of the economy you have ever seen in our history and yet the same leader is shamelessly vying to lead the country again. But the public has known the true character, Madam Speaker, of this person and we will not be fooled again. What transpired was totally irresponsible, Madam Speaker, and they have the audacity to call this Budget irresponsible when everyone else have said otherwise about the credibility of the Budget.

People, Madam Speaker, used to go with paper, handwritten notes by the Ministers, this is the fact we have seen it, give this man \$50,000, security or guitar drum kit set - there. Read the detailed records, it is all there.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk about Government debt now. Some have claimed debt to be at \$6 billion, some are saying \$6.5 billion and some have gone to the extent of saying that the debt is around \$8 billion.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that our debt as at July 2017 stood at \$4.67 billion and is expected to be around \$5.17 billion by the end of this fiscal year. But \$2.8 billion dollars of this was inherited from previous Governments and they have said "Yes, this happens in all Governments". Yes, but they also need to acknowledge the fact that \$2.8 billion is from the previous Government. We have actually paid over \$2 billion in interest payments alone on the debt of previous Governments. To compute this is simple, Madam Speaker, but such simple things obviously are hard for the Opposition to grasp.

Let me explain briefly: a 7 percent annual interest cost on this \$2.8 billion debt equates to \$196 million and thus over 11 years, this accumulates to over \$2 billion.

Madam Speaker, anyone that has a basic understanding of economics or finance or even with basic common sense should know that they should not just look at it as just a normal debt in isolation, and anyone who does that is actually trying to mislead or create false panic, as the Honourable Minister, Dr. Mahendra Reddy, highlighted about debt.

Madam Speaker, the Government debt should be measured relative to the size of the economy or GDP. I am trying to use an ordinary person's example. A person earning \$30,000, a person earning \$500,000 - what is the capacity to take debt? The economy or the GDP is the income of the country, Madam Speaker, and by that measure, our debt to GDP ratio sits at 45.6 percent, at the end of the last fiscal year, the lowest in 15 years.

Also, Madam Speaker, agencies such as IMF have clearly commended the Fijian Government through reducing its debt to GDP ratio by 10 percentage points. In the last six years, none of them quoted IMF on that basis.

Madam Speaker, our debt to GDP ratio is expected to slightly increase to 47 percent due to a large post disaster spending. Had we not spent close to \$500 million in the last two financial years on disasters rehabilitation, Madam Speaker, our debt position would have been close to 40 percent as a percentage of GDP.

Madam Speaker, of course, they will come here and say, "That bridge is not done, that crossing is not done", it costs money. You have to borrow money to build this up to the floods or to the cyclones, to build government quarters, schools, nonetheless our debt position is still sustainable and this has been validated by various agencies, including IMF, the World Bank, ANZ, Moody's and other credible financial institutions. Dr. Kishti Sen was here. Honourable Prof. Biman Prasad did not mention him, I understand they knew each other. Madam Speaker, in fact all our lenders and more recently the Youth and Investment Bank is eagerly offering additional loans on concessional terms.

Two weeks ago, I had a meeting with the representative of EIB (European Investment Bank). They said, "We have been told to lend you at least 15 million euros (€15) every year or every two years with a single potential", but we ourselves are saying, "no" because you have to have the capacity to be able to use the funds.

Madam Speaker, because our fiscal strength included financial management, that is probably an indication of saying "Don't believe ANZ." Madam Speaker, but the Opposition, of course, ignores this, they ignore the recent Budget analysis where the ANZ International Economist, Dr. Kishti Sen who clearly labelled the Budget as responsible.

Madam Speaker, the point that we have continued to drive at in this Parliament is that, debt is not bad, if it is used to invest in building productive capacity. This is basic economics.

Honourable Aseri Radrodro, I think, talked about Electrification. In the Budget we have an allocation of \$50 million for Rural Electrification, Madam Speaker.

HON. MEMBER.- Not enough.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- She is saying not enough.

We have to have the capacity to actually put in the lines. We need the personnel to put it in, you cannot just put a figure and then it sits there with no one able to implement it but the reality is, Madam Speaker, when she fails to tell Parliament this is the highest level of spending in electrification.

Madam Speaker, this is, of course, basic economics. All borrowings by this Government has been for capital expenditure. We also have a larger operating savings of around \$800 million compared to a mere \$27 million in 2006. These operating savings mentioned by Honourable Aseri Radrodro are also directed towards capital expenditure.

Madam Speaker, as a comparison, since 2007 we have spent double the amount in capital expenditure than previous Governments from 1970 to 2006 but for every dollar of CAPEX we have borrowed only 33 cents, as opposed to previous Governments that borrowed 76 cents for every dollar on CAPEX spent. What that means, Madam Speaker, is because we have a larger operating surplus, we are able to use that for more capital expenditure. In fact we are the only government that has been spending to a tune of 40 percent over its budget on capital expenditure. This is a FijiFirst legacy, Madam Speaker, and one that is hard to beat.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition stated that our debt to person is \$6,500. This is not fully true, Madam Speaker, but more importantly, a fact that they completely ignored, that is why I called “obfuscation facts”, our income per person has risen to around \$12,000. They deliberately omitted this to suit their own agenda.

Madam Speaker, we talked about civil servants’ contracts. I will quickly get on to that, we have spent a little bit of money on that, about civil servants being on contracts, they are uttering about bringing back permanent employment terms but what are they trying to preach, Madam Speaker, is far different from what they are actually practising.

The SODELPA camp admitted publicly that their staff cannot be paid overtime as they are on contracts. Madam Speaker, is that not hypocrisy? How can they even think about running the country when they cannot even manage their own internal affairs, even deciding upon paying overtime to their own staff?

Madam Speaker, this is what SODELPA is all about. They are saying one thing and do the complete opposite. That is why at the beginning or introduction of my speech this evening, Madam Speaker, I talked about the hypocrisy that is taking place, the contradictions and, in fact, the paradoxes that are taking place.

The objective for the Civil Service Reform is very clear, we want a modern, high performing civil servants who are responsive to government priorities, Madam Speaker. At the top of the list of priorities providing equal quality service to all Fijians and equally.

We are promoting a culture, Madam Speaker, and a system where recruitments are transparent, fair, and purely based on merits and rewards based on performance. We will work not compromising set standards that are premised on international best practices.

Contrast this, Madam Speaker, with the sentiments counted by the other side when the outward here appear sympathetic or empathetic but really it is a ploy to bring back the old system of appointments based on who we know, old boy, old girl, status and where you come from with the connection. But this is, Madam Speaker, how will they run the Civil Service, Madam Speaker, not following independent processes that are transparent.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I am rather offended or felt sorry for the Secretary-General who has been roped into this by the Honourable Shadow Minister for Economy talking about her work, her employment, her family. Madam Speaker, the reality is that, we cannot use these kind of motives and I feel really sorry for her. I mean, that is cheap to do that, very cheap.

Madam Speaker, he is saying now that because someone has got a family, therefore, we should renew their contract irrespective of how they perform. Madam Speaker, we are not running a charity. If you are working in the private sector, you do not perform, you do not get your contract renewed. Why should they be different from the Civil Service? Who are you concerned about? The 894,000 Fijian citizens who the Civil Service is supposed to serve, are we worried about the handful of people who are not performing?

Obviously, there are some civil servants who have high, very good performance. Some civil servants are excellent, they put in the extra mile and guess what? The Civil Service Reform actually recognises that, they will get bonuses for them. The system actually allows for that. The salaries actually, Madam Speaker, have increased for civil servants.

Madam Speaker, I have to say this in Parliament. Just this week while sitting yesterday and last week also, I had to agree to the termination of a teacher who got primary school kids to whom he was teaching, got them to drop their pants and play with their testicles. I had to agree to the termination of another person who fondled some high school girls. They come here portraying all civil servants as if they are coated in milk and honey.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that, these things do happen. The reality is, Madam Speaker, that the provision on employment does allow that. The contracts do allow for that. We want teachers to be high performers, we have continuously said that the teachers' contracts will be automatically renewed every five years. They come here and said that they would not get loans. What nonsense!

If you go to the private sector and I had worked in the private sector, many of them have not worked in the private sector, I had a contract for three years and got loans for two houses, I could afford it on my salary. But they gave me a loan just because I had a contract for three years. It does not mean that they will not give you a loan. This is the type of contribution we have had in Parliament. They try to conjure up those ill-feelings, not discussing those issues based on facts.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Salote Radrodro selectively spoke on the two women - Foreign Permanent Secretaries, they are also acting Permanent Secretaries for other portfolios.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, point of order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Speaker, we note the extended time that is being given to the Honourable Minister for Economy for his right of reply. Can we just clarify; how much more time

from the normal 20 minutes that he has been given, because it looks like he is going to take normal time, the same time that has been given to him on the Budget Address. I think it is more than 20 minutes now.

HON. SPEAKER.- I had already announced that I will give him extra time in his right of reply.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- How much more time, that is what we are asking?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, Honourable Salote Radrodro selectively said that the two foreign women Permanent Secretaries are also Acting Permanent Secretary for other portfolios. But she ignored the fact that a Fijian Permanent Secretary, Yogesh Karan, is also not just the Permanent Secretary for the Prime Minister's Office but also Acting Permanent Secretary for Waterways, Permanent Secretary for Sugar, as well as Permanent Secretary for Immigration. The Permanent Secretary for Agriculture, David Kolitagane, is also the Acting Permanent Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport. The Permanent Secretary for iTaukei Affairs, Naipote Katonitabua, is also the Acting Permanent Secretary for Fisheries. Why should they be selected?

You see, Madam Speaker, what they are doing is basically pushing forward to that, built into that, Madam Speaker, there is a bit of xenophobia, a bit of ethnicity and a bit of *masala*. You see, which one you can check, which spice you will catch, that is what is happening, Madam Speaker. And why they have not been advertised? The PSC is going to advertise it, PSC is an independent body and PSC is the employer of permanent secretaries as it is provided for in the Constitution, Madam Speaker.

Head 50 has been spoken a lot about and, Madam Speaker, I basically believe that it is not only about, again, there is a bit of *masala* been thrown in, it is personalised. But Honourable Vuniwaqa and other Ministers have spoken about it, so I just want to turn them to this book. If they care to look at pages 339 to 340 of the Estimates, it says "Head of Expenditure; Programme Activity Standard Expenditure Group; Responsible Officer." Look at that. Who needs to sign now, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker, they are Permanent Secretaries. If they also bother to read the laws under the Financial Management Act 2004, it says that Permanent Secretaries are responsible for managing the financial affairs in their respective Ministries, in accordance with the requirements under the Financial Management Act.

Section 28 says, and I quote: "A Permanent Secretary is responsible for inter alia, effective and efficient, and economical management of the agency." That is what it says in the law, if they bother to read the laws. They also need to read the Gazette.

In the Gazette, it says that the Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Economy will be the person who will approve all RIEs, all expenditures up to million dollars. We have changed this. Previously, it used to be that if it was a project less than a million dollars, then the permanent secretaries would deal with it. Now it is a sum of \$1 million.

In practical terms, if Honourable Minister Seruiratu has some projects which are under RIE and it says a \$20 million project and every time they require funds like \$900,000, \$500,000, even though it is a \$20 million project or \$50 million project, it never comes to the Minister, it is dealt with by his Permanent Secretary and the Permanent Secretary to the Minister for Economy. The reason why Head 50 actually has a large allocation again, they never bother to read, Madam Speaker, it has \$255 million and it foretells. Now it will be put in Head 50.

Honourable Leawere in his capacity said, why we need to put it under the Ministry of Education? It is a loan. Loans are put in the Expenditure Heads, so it is put in Head 50, and when TSLB says to the PS for Ministry of Economy, "we now have 5,000 students in USP, we need to pay USP the fees. They

provide their acquittals, the PS for Economy releases the fees. That is why Head 50 has got \$255 million, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, they provide the acquittals, I am trying to cut my speech short but they seem to be obviously object to it. Firstly again, they have talked about the cost of living, they do not of course talk about a real solution, they talk about reducing VAT, bringing back on the so called basic food items. Basic food items, Madam Speaker, are not actually basic food items. They claim about our manifesto. Madam Speaker, what we have done, we have done better than the manifesto.

We have, in fact, decreased VAT (they do not mention that) from 15 percent to 9 percent. That is the reality. Madam Speaker, they talk about inflation, as you look at inflation, it is impacted by *yaqona* and various others, but what is really critical to understand is that they plucked this \$4 and \$5 an hour out of thin air.

Honourable Usamate has very eloquently spoke about that. He has spoken about the consultant who talked and looked at the social wages. In fact, if you look at recent studies on Fiji, they say that because of social wages, we have managed to get poverty low. Otherwise, people actually float into the poverty track.

Madam Speaker, let me give you an example. If, for example, you increase the minimum wage from \$2.68 at the moment to say \$5, so, it is almost doubled. Now, all right, fine, we are all happy. Guess what will happen to the person whose minimum wage at the moment in the 10 sectorial wages is \$5.50 per hour or \$6 per hour! What do you think he or she will say? You put these up by a mere almost 100 percent, "I want mine up by a 100 percent too." So they will go up to \$10 or \$12. Honourable Dr. Samisoni understands the implications, so is the Honourable Chand. So with that spiralling out of control, the inflationary impact of this proposal, Madam Speaker. What we are saying, we need to carefully study it.

Madam Speaker, it will cost, it will push up the price of business and push up inflation. Do you think the people who are currently being paid \$5.50 per hour will sit back and say, "Yes, this is great, this unskilled worker who is now getting \$5 an hour, I am quite happy with mine - \$5.50, and I am skilled actually?" You think they will sit back? Of course, they will not! They will want it higher, and guess what will happen? Their employer will then put up the price of whatever service they are delivering. That is what will happen.

Hotel rates will go up. Are we going to then price ourselves out of the tourism market? Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is, we need to take a principled position. We need to be able to understand what is actually happening in the economy. Madam Speaker, the point of the matter is that, even the *de facto* Deputy Leader of SODELPA, in one of the speeches she gave at USP actually said that, "yes, by proposing \$4 per hour, it may have an impact on small businesses and Government can come and subsidise." Please check the video, it is there. It is on record.

LyndaTabuya, Madam Speaker, of SODELPA when she gave a lecture at USP said, "Yes, by putting up the \$4 an hour rate, it may have an impact on small businesses and Government will subsidise. How will Government subsidise? How will Government subsidise? We will go around checking, 'oh, so you employ five people, you put it up to \$4 an hour'. How much; what percentage will we give; and how will we monitor that? This is how ridiculous the proposals are, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Radrodro has very quickly made some illogical claims that taxpayers are being burdened because of the fact that our tax revenue collection has increased. In fact, our tax threshold has increased to \$30,000, so people do not pay any taxes. The reason why the revenue has increased, Madam Speaker, is because the economy is doing well, people spending are more, more VAT being collected and obviously compliance has increased. Madam Speaker, FRCS is actually going

after people who have been stealing from the system. So compliance has increased, consumption has increased, therefore we are able to increase, Madam Speaker, our income tax rate, the income tax collection.

Honourable Vadei, who is unfortunately not here, said that the ordinary Fijians have been lumped with Environment & Climate Adaptation Levy (ECAL) and Service Turnover Tax (STT). No, they are not being lumped. You go down and eat in any shop over here, you go and buy anything, you do not pay ECAL and STT unless you go and purchase a service or good from a prescribed business, which is like a cinema, a rental car, or a hotel, and the bulk of the revenue from ECAL actually comes from the tourists, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, again you know we had some utterances about Wi-Fi hotspots and *Walesi* and *FBC*. Madam Speaker, again I think this is the *masala* being thrown into this again without necessarily going too much into that. Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is, privacy is protected, *Walesi* does not breach privacy. In fact, Madam Speaker, last week we were in Vanua Levu and as I was boarding the plane, we actually went to interview candidates in Vanua Levu. We got some nice stories about NFP there too, but when we were boarding the plane, a taxi driver came up to us and said, “thank you very much for *Walesi*.” He said, “I am sitting here and watching the World Cup Soccer on my phone” through one of the, I think it was *Fiji One*, he watched it on *Fiji One*.

Madam Speaker, this is the level of empowerment, not just of information, but entertainment and connectivity to the rest of Fiji that *Walesi* is providing.

Madam Speaker, of course, we have a huge programme on that. Madam Speaker, I do not really want to go into this, but lastly, I want to make that comment on this, and Honourable Professor Prasad actually did mention it after I harassed him across the floor, I continuously said it to him. Madam Speaker, Honourable Niko Nawaikula had a *Facebook* post and he called this budget, “a racist budget”.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- He called this a racist budget and his logic, Madam Speaker, and I am glad Honourable Professor Prasad for the first time without necessarily mentioning his name did say “your post, people who said it was racist budget on the basis of this.”

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is, by allocating \$500,000 for the commemoration of the 140th year of arrival of *Girmityas* and trying to set up a museum of \$300,000 does not make it a racist budget. In fact, Madam Speaker, it is an indication of how he thinks. Seriously. It is, Madam Speaker, an indication of the great calamity that will befall this country if those people were able to sit on this side. Every single policy, every single decision, every single person they meet will be based on ethnicity. That is a fact, it used to happen, and it will happen again.

Madam Speaker, actually I shudder for my own children, if those people ever came on this side and I shudder for the future of this country, and unfortunately some people are willing to make compromises too.

Madam Speaker, the reality is this, that this Budget, I do not want to go into cost of road building, Madam Speaker. They talked about subsidising kidney dialysis. We started off giving pension, if I could just round it off, to those people who are over the age of 70, we started giving \$30, brought down the age to 68, we started giving \$50. We brought it down the age to 65, we started giving \$100, because we have the capacity to do so because economically we are doing well.

In the same way Madam Speaker, we made announcement after careful assessment, Dr Amrish Krishna who is the only Nephrologist in the Southern Pacific, we worked with him. He told us that there are about 600 patients that may need to have access to kidney dialysis, of which some of them obviously can afford to use the kidney dialysis on a regular basis and based on our studies with him, our discussions with him, we have made this announcement that those people who actually will pay, will need to pay \$150, but earn less than \$30,000, we will actually subsidise \$50.00.

Someone said, why we single out Kidney Foundation? Why? Because Madam Speaker the cost is \$250 and the Nephrologist has told us, it should be done for \$150, in fact it should be cheaper. And in fact, we are using it now for the Minister to be able to look at some smart procurement of drugs to be able to bring down the cost even further.

Madam Speaker, this is the first step, and if you take your first step with a lot of consideration, and a lot of input into decision-making, then you will get it right. Of course to round off the Opposition's many labels for this Budget, but all Fijians know that we are persistent and responsible. We will lower the Budget deficit at 3.5 percent and we continue to invest in infrastructure development, education, health, medical services and social welfare initiatives.

Madam Speaker, the FijiFirst Government has worked hard to build a legally inclusive society. Legally inclusive society, Madam Speaker, not this lip service that is not only moral, ethically correct, but also places loyalty to the country. This, Madam Speaker, would actually enhance the economic growth, investment and facilitates a big pool of human resources to continue the growth.

We want our young people to stay in Fiji, irrespective of where they come from, irrespective of their province, irrespective of their denomination, of their religion, because we want them all to be contributing Fijians and that is how we draw, Madam Speaker, we build a bigger pool of human resources and that is really our main capital resources.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all the Members for their contributions, including the Members of the Opposition, notwithstanding the fact that it is fairly pedestrian. But, Madam Speaker, the reality is that this Budget is for all Fijian families and we look forward to the debate on this and I wish all, everyone to support the Budget. *Vinaka*, thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

Pursuant to Standing Order 99(3), the 2018-2019 Appropriation Bill 2018 (Bill No. 10 of 2018), has now been read a second time and without any question being put, the Bill and the Estimates now stand referred to the Committee of Supply.

We will move on to the next Item on the Agenda. We will continue until 10.30 p.m., as we did last night. This is to avoid us having to move on to about 1.00 a.m. in the next two nights, so we will just continue with the time that we have. Dinner time is 7.30 p.m. so between now and 7.30 p.m. we can continue.

Does anyone oppose?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

Bill read a second time.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will resolve into Committee of Supply to consider each Head in the Budget Estimates. This process is envisaged to be completed on Thursday, and then the Committee of Supply will vote on the Schedules and Clauses of the 2018-2019 Appropriation Bill 2018.

Pursuant to the agreement reached between the Whips, we will attempt to complete the debate and vote on Heads 1 to 17 before adjournment.

For the Committee stage, I will sit at the Table with the Secretary-General and Members should refer to me as Madam Chairperson. The Mace will also be placed in the bracket under the Table.

The Secretary-General will announce each Head separately. Members may then stand to speak on that Head, and you may speak more than once on each Head.

You may also move amendments to the Estimates in that Head. If a Member does move an amendment, debate will then be on the Head and that amendment. At the end of the debate the amendment or amendments will be voted on first and then followed by vote on the Head.

Please, be reminded that amendments in Committee of Supply are limited to those permitted in Standing Order 100(2), that is, either an increase, decrease or removal of the item or Sub-Head from the Head being debated.

Finally, the debate, if any, should be confined to the Head, Sub-Head or Item referred to. Any debate must be relevant, concise and not repetitious.

Having said that, because the Estimates run the full breadth of Government's expenditure and revenue, the debate will be far-reaching but must be relatable to the Head being debated. There are Heads 1 through 50 which we need to get through and, therefore, I will be vigilant and order Members to cease speaking, if I feel the rule for the Committee process has been breached.

Honourable Members, I ask for your co-operation.

In Committee:

Head 1- Office of the President

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- In Head 1-1-1 (1) - Personal Emoluments, what is that increase for, Madam Chairperson? How many more staff are they taking on?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, due to the increase of two additional positions. One is the Assistant Domestic Coordinator Officer and one Assistant Landscape Officer.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are there any other comments?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes, Madam Chairperson, just a clarification. Looking at this Budget kit book, there is an allocation for construction in the President's Office of \$2 million that has been allocated here, but it is not in Head 50.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is under the Construction Implementation Unit (CIU) - Head 50. Just for clarification, you will see most of the Capital Expenditure is now under the CIU. We are trying to centralise and get better return for our money.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote on Head 1.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount of Head 1 – Office of the President be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ‘Noes’)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Head 1 is, therefore, agreed to.

Head 1 - Office of the President agreed to.

Head 2 – Office of the Prime Minister

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments, if any.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, on the Established Staff – SEG 1. The increase there, is it the effect of the Job Evaluation Exercise or additional staff or what is the increase in terms of the Established Staff?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, it is a combination of both. One additional position has been created which is Principal Policy Analyst and the others are the general increase in the salaries of the existing staff.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no other comments, Parliament will now vote.

HON. RO. T.V. KEPHA.- Madam Chairperson, Head 2-1-2 (10) –Small Grant Project (\$9,000,000). In the 2015 Auditor-General Report, there was a concern that they have better accounting, particularly for that SEG. So, do you have a professional person looking at the accounts to make sure that all checks and balances are there and they are signing off on LPOs, to ensure that there is no risk of fraud because that is what that is contained in the Auditor-General’s Report? So, that is my question.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I am sure all those processes will be in place in the Expenditure Update.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We have, in fact, some of the key capital projects are also now being centralised through the CIU, even though they have been funded through the Prime Minister’s Office.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- A clarification in terms of Programme 1-1(6) – Fiji Mahogany Trust.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- \$250,000.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is the Fiji Mahogany Trust which we give money to

HON. A.M. RADRDRO.- What is that money for?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- And made up of landowners. Landowners make up the trust, so we give them \$250,000 for the running of the Trust, et cetera.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, Programme 3-1 (9) – Biometric Verification System and e-Passport Issuance (\$300,000). I just need a clarification from the Honourable Minister, is it already in the process or this is new?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, it is already in process but it will continue in the new financial year. We have already started work on it.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The e-passports have already been issued?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Well, they are working on it and it will continue in the new financial year. They have already got some capacity, they are doing some issuance on that, but the idea is to complete it.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- On this Biometric Verification System, the question is; because the Office has suggested that they acquire and implement a software solution from vetting to printing, have you acquired that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I am sorry, can you repeat the question, please?

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- The Office, Madam Chairperson, has proposed that they work on acquiring and implementing a software solution. This is from vetting to printing of passports. Have you acquired that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Printing our own passports?

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Yes, from the vetting to printing, so there is just one software that does that. The question is, have you acquired that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We do not print our own passports.

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- That was the proposal from the Office.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Which Office?

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- The Immigration Office.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Through who?

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- It was in the 2015 Auditor-General's Report. So, my question is have you acquired for that, yes or no?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We are not printing passports.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- So, you have not acquired it?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Well, obviously as we are not printing passports, we do not have the capacity to print it.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- No, that was just the question, yes or no?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, I said we do not print it.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Alright.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Matanitobua.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Programme 2-1(7) - Former Prime Minister Benefit (\$170,000). Has there been an increase?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The only two Prime Ministers who get the benefit are Mr. Rabuka and Mr. Qarase. This is an increase. Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry does not get it because he did not serve the full five years. He was removed by some of the people on the other side, who may be have linked to other people.

This entitlement to the former Prime Ministers is under the 1994 Prime Ministers Pension Act. The entitlement includes the allocation of a vehicle with the driver, medical benefits, household stuff and the maintenance and operations of the vehicle.

So there are two vehicles that are given by Government to them as the Prime Minister's vehicles. We have to pay for the driver, their medical benefits, their household stuff and the maintenance/operations of the vehicle. So, we are required by law to do that.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Of \$170,000?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, an increase of \$70,000.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Just a clarification, is there any additional benefits?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Some of the requirements have increased. You better talk to them, they will know why. We can reduce it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Programme 2-1 (2), there is a change in Government Wage Earners, can I get an explanation on that increase?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sure, you will see that throughout. All the Heads, you will see an increase because remember under the FijiFirst Government, we increased the meal allowance from \$9 to \$20. So people who work overtime now get paid \$20 a meal and this is now to capture that increase because when we had an increase, some of them obviously were viring funds, so we want to give them enough funds to be able to pay them \$20 a meal. Honourable Dr. Samisoni, that is what they are doing, paying \$20 a meal.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments? Honourable Ratu Matanitobua?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Madam Chairperson, can the Honourable Minister clarify on Programme 3-1(7) - Citizenship Ceremony (\$50,000), which a new allocation.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is a new allocation. If you look at other countries and, for example, if you were to go to Australia and become a citizen of Australia, you actually have to go to a public town hall, there is actually a swearing in ceremony and we want to start doing that for Fiji because a lot of people have been taking Fijian citizenship for granted.

We are working towards ensuring that not everyone should just simply come over and get citizenship. As you know, we have been lumped with the laws from the past, so the whole idea is to have this, sort of, civic pride about getting Fijian citizenship, and that is what it is for. So they take the oath, et cetera; it is loyalty to the country.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Do you have any other comments?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no other comments, Parliament will now vote on Head 2.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount in Head 2 – Office of the Prime Minister, be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ‘Noes’)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the Head is therefore agreed to.

Head 2 - Office of the Prime Minister agreed to.

Head 3 - Office of the Attorney-General

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chairperson, Head 3, Programme 1, Activity 1. The increase in the established staff

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What SEG?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- SEG 1.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Established staff.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- It has got \$229,400. What is the reason for that, did they increase the number of staff?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Job Evaluation Exercise. You will see again, many of the Ministries peoples' salaries have gone up because of the Job Evaluation Exercise. That is why that is reflected in there. So there is something like over 40 lawyers in the Attorney-General's Office and of

course there are other staff and their jobs have been assessed and they have got increments, and pegged to the market.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chairperson, again just on Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 – Legal Expense and Fees. How long this has been in the budget? Is there any plan that there should be qualified people in the office to take care of cases and not to hire people?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Karavaki as you would know sometimes this figure if you see it from the previous years, actually it has come down and it does not always necessarily get used. It has been put in there in the event it does need to be used. Sometimes, for example, we do have some complex laws that may need to be drafted, regulations. As you know, we are getting a lot of electronic transactions, and all those types of things where there is not much local knowledge in that area so we need to hire people for those purposes and of course any other expenses that we need to meet. For example, if we ask to pay for cost, this is the allocation for that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are you on Programme 1, Activity 1?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, Madam Chairperson. SEG 7, I noticed the allocations for the Revision of Laws - OHS Act \$100,000, Review of Copyright Act \$100,000, Review of Land Lease Arrangement, these are not under Requisition. If I understand it correctly they were in the last budget as well. So are these just fillers or ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Are they just fillers again from last year or you really intend to do this?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, a lot of it depends on the ability of the respective Ministries to be able to give us information. Sometimes the Ministry need bit more time in terms of policy development. Once that policy input is received and then we are able to draft the laws and lot of it requires consultations to and fro between the two

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Can I, Madam Chairperson, ask another question to the Honourable Attorney General? I remember raising this issue and I was told that the draft legislation on adrenal transplants was with the Solicitor General and I do not see that listed here, whether it on the part of the activity.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There are lot of laws being reviewed. Some of the laws can be done in- house. These are the laws that have been identified that we may need to get outside expertise. So sometimes we bring in someone from overseas or sometimes this is actually used for the consultations. For example, with OHS, when there may be a proposal, say, given by the Minister for Labour, we actually then need to go out and meet people; you meet worker organisations, employer organisations or even employer and employees individually and get the inputs. So part and parcel of that too, is to fine tune the law and then of course we bring the Bill to Parliament.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Still on Programme 1, Activity 1.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I need some clarification, Madam Chairperson, Programme 1-1 (7) - Review of Land Lease Arrangement. What does that encompass?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Review of land lease arrangement, Madam Chairperson, is about the various land leases, in particular Crown leases where there is need to perhaps review the

arrangements. Sometimes we have actually had, where there has been legal issues that had been pending, sometimes also with the *iTaukei* land where we need to actually make payment because of the fact that legally the tenant has been out of pocket or the landlord has been out of pocket so that is to cater for that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anymore on Programme 1, Activity 1?

HON. PROF. B. C. PRASAD.- SEG 7, Honourable Minister. Last year, there was an allocation of \$6 million for Digital Government transformation. I do not see that here.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It has actually been put away somewhere else, in Communications. So when we come Communications, it has been put in there.

HON. PROF. B. C. PRASAD.- So, what is the progress there? Is it ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- When we come to that, I will tell you what is the progress.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comment on Programme 1, Activity 1? Honourable Ro Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- SEG 3 - Madam Chairperson. Increase of \$100,000 for Travel, Subsistence and Telecommunications. Can we have an explanation of that increase?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, SEG 3, right?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is to cater for the increase in the rate for meal allowance, Telecom and Vodafone bills for the professional staff who travel abroad for official purposes.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Programme 2, Activity 1.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Have we finished with Programme 1? Once we have finished a Programme, we are not going back. Thank you. Now we will move on to Programme 2. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- SEG 8.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG 8.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Can the Honourable Minister explain what that is about briefly?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- On the Ono-i-Lau Airstrip?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is preparatory works for the Ono-i-Lau Airstrip, we are going to upgrade it.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- So, what type of planes can land there?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Basically it is the Twin Otters. I think they are about seven or eight-seater planes.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- All right.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We bought five new ones.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- You understand I am asking on behalf of Madam Speaker, too.

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- All the brand new ones will go there.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comment on this particular Programme.

HON. PROF. B. C. PRASAD.- This is on Programme 2, Activity 1. SEG 7. I noticed that in last year's budget there was a \$100,000 allocation for aircraft accident investigation, now it has been increased to \$300,000. I am assuming that the tragic *Cessna Investigation Report* is now available. Is it available now or what is happening to that report?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, it is not available because the investigation has not been completed from memory. We do need some money to fund the completion of that investigation. Also we are catering for additional funding because we found that previously, we used to vire from other SEGs because it was not enough. I mean to get someone from New Zealand, you know airfares and accommodation, just that alone is quite expensive and of course you have to then pay for the professional fees the whole time that they are here.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. PROF. B. C. PRASAD.- You do not know when the report is

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I could check and find out. I do not know.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. On Programme 1, Activity 1.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No, we are not going to Programme 1. We are onto Programme 2. I have to be very strict because we are only on Head 3. We have to finish Head 50 before we go tonight.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So, what are we on?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I am sorry we have to finish Head 17 tonight.

(Laughter)

All right, there being no other comment, Parliament will now vote.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 6 – decrease in the Operating Capital Grants of \$1.5 million. Can we get clarification on this decrease, which one of these entities have reduced their allocation?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji. It has reduced from \$2.5 million to \$1.5 million.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote on Head 3.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount of Head 3 – Office of the Attorney-General be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ‘Noes’)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- With there being no opposition, the Head is therefore agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Head 3 - Office of the Attorney-General agreed to.

Head 4 – Ministry of Economy

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments, if any?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.-Madam Chairperson, on Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG – 1 – Is it the same reasoning for the increase in Established Staff, JEE Evaluation?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, which ones?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- SEG 1.

HON. A. SAYED -KHAIYUM.- In fact, over here we have also got some overtime, it is only \$30,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments on Programme 1, Activity 1? We will move onto Activity 2, any comments, if any?

On Activity 1?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Yes.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The grant for FRCS has increased to \$68 million by \$15 million. Is it the increase in staff?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is also not just to fix up some of the staffing anomalies but also huge capital investment in their IT system and they are going to complete that, it should be online by August or September next year. So it will become a lot more easier in respect of tax returns, tax notices, et cetera, they are fixing it up.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Under Capita Grant - SEG 10.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, what are you asking about?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- SEG 6.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, we were giving them additional funding in respect to that. FRCS has also hired some outside auditors, a company called Delloite from Australia. They are now targeting a lot of companies that have not been paying so they have been actually going and doing forensic accounting. The forensic accounting capacity in FRCS is somewhat limited. As you know, some supermarkets have had to pay \$50 million, not just supermarkets but perhaps bus companies and others who may need to pay....

HON. SPEAKER.- Programme 1, Activity 1

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- On SEG 7, there is a new item there - Land Sales Act Implementation (\$25,000).

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, it is not a new item, it was there this year and there is no change.

HON. SPEAKER.- Programme 1, Activity 2

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chairperson, on SEG 7. Could you clarify the allocation of \$207,143?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is the same that was given this year, there has been no change and it is the same this year. If you see in 2017-2018, \$207,000 and again this year is \$207,000, there is no change. This is the National Asset Management Framework, essentially it is developing of register of all our national assets that is owned by Government. The idea is eventually for Government to get into accrual accounting.

HON. SPEAKER.-Any other comment on Programme 1, Activity 2?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Activity 1 – SEG 6, there has been an increase of about \$700,000 - Grant to Fiji Servicemen's Aftercare Fund. Can there be an elaboration on that one, please?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you. Madam Chairperson, this is an increase in the Grant to the Fiji Servicemen's Aftercare Fund of \$700,000. This is to cater for the additional 107 RFMF Regular Force retiring in August 2018 to July 2019, so we had to increase that. Yes, and also of course the Police too.

HON. SPEAKER.- Any other comments on Activity 2?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- SEG 4?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Activity 2, SEG 4 - Maintenance of Safes and also on SEG 5 – Safes (\$8,000). Can we have some clarification on those two items, Madam Chair?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, Madam Chairperson, the question in SEG 4 is why the increase?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- No, Madam Chairperson, the Maintenance of Safes (\$1,000) and then we have Safes again in SEG 5.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, Madam Chairperson, the question in SEG 4 is, why the increase?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- No, Madam Chairperson, Maintenance of Safes (\$1,000) and then we have Safes (\$8,000) again in SEG 5. Are they the same or are they different? One is on Maintenance, and the other one on Safe, can I seek some clarification on that, thank you?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- One is “Maintenance of Safes” and one is “Maintenance of Office Equipment”, that is SEG 4. SEG 5 is for buying Safes, and one is Maintenance of Safes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on to Programme 1, Activity 3.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Madam Chairperson, can I seek clarification from the Honourable Minister on the allocation of Personal Emolument, SEG 1 and Allowances but there is an increase in Overtime.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sir, you want to know why the decrease?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- There was an increase on Overtime.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There is a decrease in the number of positions, and then there is FNPF then Allowances is \$50,000 ...

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Overtime (\$80,000).

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- An increase in the Overtime Vote by \$79,000.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Can I have a clarification on that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- For those people who stayed on, they might work overtime so they can get paid \$79,000 but overall the requirement in that area has decreased as far as the safe payments are concerned for wages.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- So overtime is paid for SEG 1 when they work overtime?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, for those people who fall under SEG 1. They are not Government Wage Earners because as you know that under the Civil Service Reforms now, we have increased the Band as to who can get overtime now so that Band has increased, so more people are eligible for overtime now, to put it simply.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- SEG 1?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- SEG 1 is for Established Staff.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The amount of \$80,000 is there, so they are eligible for Overtime if they work overtime?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, that is what I am saying. Before generally overtime was only for Government Wage Earners, and also the people who could earn, if you are an Established Staff

and if you were below, I think, \$20,000 or \$25,000, only then you get overtime. No one has actually gone over up to over \$30,000, so even if you went up to \$30,000 you can still get paid overtime so again, the Civil Service Reforms are better for the civil servants. That is the point that I am trying to make. Honourable Radrodro is not listening too.

HON. SPEAKER.- Moving on to Activity 4?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Just a clarification on this Annual Maintenance Fee - is that a Software and what is that Software for (SEG 5)?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- To be frank I do not know exactly what TeamMate is for but I know it is for audit purposes, so there is a software that they use for audit purposes. Specifically, the function of it, I know the function of it, it is to do with audit itself, and that is the Annual Maintenance Fee, and that is the Software called TeamMate.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Can we just get some clarification in terms of the Personal Emoluments, what is the number of staff in this department?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I do not have numbers with me, I can give it to you later. We have enough people there, in fact we attract in some good people too.

HON. SPEAKER.- Let us move on to Activity 5.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Chairperson, the last Item, Programme 1 Activity 5 SEG 4, "Maintenance Cost for 20 VIP vehicles": Where are those vehicles and what happens to other vehicles that do not come under that SEG?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We were given a fleet of VIP vehicles, mainly given by the Chinese, so this is the Maintenance Cost for those vehicles. So whenever we have Dignitaries come along, you see them driving along in these black vehicles, and we also insure them.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any more comments on Activity 6.

(Chorus of 'Noes')

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Activity 6, Madam Chairperson. If I am correct, there was a \$500,000 allocation for the so-called "Economic Intelligence Unit" last year, what has happened to that?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Which SEG are you talking about?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Activity 6, no there is no SEG, I am just asking under that Activity 6 - Fiscal Policy, Research and Analysis, there was a \$500,000 allocation for the Economic Intelligence Unit. I do not see that this year. Is it being moved somewhere else?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is within the Fiscal Policy, Research and Analysis. You see that salaries has increased under SEG 1 for that by \$164,000. That is for essentially recruitment of the staff.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- All right, it has gone into that (\$984,084).

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Activity 7

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- SEG 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Which Activity?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Apologies, we are still on 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No comments on Activity 7?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Activity 7 (SEG 7): What is the “Stocktake of Education Facilities (\$300,000)”? If the Honourable Minister can explain that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Leader of the Opposition, what we announced in the Budget speech, essentially the idea is that, there has never been a stocktake done of all the schools in Fiji.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- This is the one.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, what is their current status, the conditions of the buildings, et cetera. This is done by the Construction Implementation Unit, we have engineers there and all those types of people.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- SEG 4, Activity 7, that increase in the Travel and Communication: How come there is an increase in the Travel and Communication for the Construction Implementation Unit?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- They do travel, which SEG?

HON. MEMBER.- SEG 3.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Oh, yes, they do travel. We have got projects all over Fiji so they go in the far-reaches of Cakaudrove to the inner reaches of Naitasiri.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Any comments on Activity 8?

(Chorus of ‘Noes’)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- SEG 7 - Climate Change Policy, the Oceans Policy, Green Growth Policy - there is a decrease from last year but what is the status of these policies, have they been completed or work-in-progress?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, the decrease in the Climate Finance Training by \$215,000; Climate Change Policy by \$100,000 and the creation of a new allocation for Oceans Policy (that is the new one); the other two are actually with Climate Finance Training (that is gone) because as you know that we are working together to assist FDB to get accreditation so FDB has now got accreditation. They themselves are now working internally to be able to increase their accreditation - to go up from \$10 million to \$50 million, so they are doing that themselves.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments on Activity 8

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- SEG 2: It was there last year, comes to zero, no allocation. I need an explanation on why the Government Wage Earners

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Because they have no Wage Earners any more in that Ministry. There were some relieving staff that were there but they no longer require them. This is a very sort of policy-driven department. So, you do not need basically Wage Earners. If they require the drivers, they come from the Ministry of Economy pool, so they do not need that.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- On SEG 1.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG 1, Activity?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- There is an increase on that one, whether those from SEG 2 have been absorbed in SEG 1. You see an increase in Personal Emoluments for the Established Staff.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Established Staff are people with specific skillsets and we are to accommodate them. The number of the staff that were in the Climate Change Division were actually funded by external parties. Previously, their salaries were paid by external parties, so now they are no longer being funded so we have to fund it ourselves and some of them, of course, are new people that we have had to hire, so that is why their salaries have increased.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments on Activity 8?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Let us move on to Programme 2 Activity 1: any comments?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- My question, Madam Chairperson, this appears to be a new item on Programme 1 Activity 2, can the Honourable Minister explain the purpose of this allocation?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We are on to Programme 2.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Programme 2 Activity 1.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Programme 2 Activity 1 SEG 7. There appears to be a new item.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Which one?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- To be a new item in Programme 1 Activity 2.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 2 Activity 1, which SEG are you referring to?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- SEG 7, which is Population Demography Household Survey Division.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Yes, yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, we can help, all of us in Parliament, if you can tell us exactly where are you referring to?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- I am sorry, I did not bring my book.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So do not belabour the point. In SEG 7, Madam Chairperson, the amount has decreased firstly by \$14 million for the Census, as you know we had the Census in this financial year.

Therefore, obviously we no longer going to have the Census but there is a little bit of work that needs to be completed, so \$14 million has been reduced but an additional \$2 million has been added for the Household Income and Expenditure Survey. So if you balance that off, \$14 million minus \$2 million gives you an overall decrease of \$12.3 million which you see in the change line, that column.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Is there any record of ethnicity on this and I am interested as a researcher myself.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, we are doing the Budget and this is about figures, and the figures pertain to the cost, pertaining to the actual programme and activity.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments? Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, I am just sort of curious, I mean we have an allocation there for Population Demography Household Survey Division (\$225,000). We have Population Census last year, we had roughly closely to more than \$14 million (\$14,531,757) I think for the whole Population Census. We have not had all the data that we should have had out of that Census, where are we? I mean, is this additional allocation to get the data sorted out and find out the data available or are we still ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Bureau of Statistics, as you know, is an independent body and the Bureau of Statistics obviously has a request of an allocation of another \$200,000 for the Population Census, presumably to finish it off.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, but it not an independent body as in the sense of independent bodies, I mean it comes under your Ministry, but we need to know when the Population Census data comes in in a desegregated form when the work has been done, and we see these further allocations.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I am quite happy to furnish you with that information.

HON. P. CHAND.- All right, thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Leader of Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Same SEG 7, Household, Income and Expenditure Survey, over what period of time would that take place?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Within this financial year.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other, Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- In SEG 7, Household, Income and Expenditure Survey (\$2,015.664), it will be a big exercise though and is this sufficient?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is the request made by the Bureau of Statistics.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments.

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Parliament will now vote on Head No.4.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount of Head 4 - Ministry of Economy, be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Head 4 - Ministry of Economy, agreed to.

We will now adjourn for dinner from 7.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m., and we will resume at 8.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 7.35 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 8.30 p.m.

Head 5 – Ministry of iTaukei Affairs

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments. Honourable Leader of the Opposition?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Head 5-1-1 (6) – Turaga-ni-Koro Allowance (\$1,483,179), Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 6. Turaga -ni- Koro Allowance. For the Honourable Minister, is that an increase in the allowance like the Nasi-ni-Koro or is it still the same?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, this has increased by \$2.1 million because the iTaukei Trust Fund and the staff have had a salary adjustment, plus the staff working at the Provincial Council level have also had a salary adjustment and we are paying a high proportion of their salaries. I can give an example, may be I will use Rewa.

In Rewa the Roko Tui, Waisake Manako, his salary is \$44, 564.50, and it has gone up by \$4,456.45. So, he now receives \$49,000. So we have actually supplemented the increase for both, the staff at the iTaukei Affairs and also the staff at the Provincial Council level. That is what that amount is for.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Chairperson, in terms of the Turaga- ni -Koro because the Nasi-ni-Koro, their allowances have gone up to \$200 so are they having an increase also?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Turaga-ni-Koro allowance is \$1.4 million and that I understand is still the same as it was this year. This is for the staff working at the Provincial Councils.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments on Activity 1, SEG 7?

HON. P. SINGH.- There is a new allocation for the National iTaukei Resource Owners Council - \$50,000? Can we please know what this is?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Under the Environment Management Act 2005, there is supposed to be a iTaukei Resource Owners Council to advise the National Environment Council on any environmental factors affecting *iTaukei* resource owners. So the funding will be utilised on allowances, transportation, publication and the hosting of meetings. This is a requirement under the Environmental Management Act. The Council is made up of resource owners.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments on Activity 1 ?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- SEG 5.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- On the same Programme?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Yes, Madam Chairperson. We note that there is a new allocation for Tabua Shop Expenses. Does this mean that the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs is going to start selling *tabua*? Can the Honourable Minister elaborate on this?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- As you know that, there has been a lot of *tabuas* that have been returned to us by the New Zealand Government and essentially, this is to look after these *tabuas*. It is dedicated to support Tabua Shop's mission to protect, promote iTaukei cultural heritage, while promoting sustainable development in terms of monitoring and regulating the circulation of *tabua* and the cost will

include the purchase of an engraving machine and other recurring costs. Yes, there is an opportunity to be able to procure this, but in a systematic manner.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments on Activity 1?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Programme 1-1(7) - Village By Laws, \$50,000 that has been allocated there. What is this allocation for?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There are various consultations they had but essentially, it is sort of rounding it off, any expenses that may relate to that. They had \$100,000 last year and it has been reduced to \$50,000 and that \$50,000 balance has been given to the iTaukei Resource Owners Council.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Programme 1-1 (6), Madam Chairperson, on the iTaukei Affairs Board, a grant of \$5.2 million, what is that for, for the operations of the Councils?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I just mentioned it. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition asked me the same question. Please, you need to be listening.

This is for the increase. The Job Evaluation Exercise was carried out so this is to cater for the increase of the staff at the iTaukei Affairs Board and also a Job Evaluation Exercise has been carried out for those who work at the Provincial Councils. So we have catered for their Job Evaluation Exercise and the additional amounts that they will need.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The daily operations of the Councils, where is it?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- At the Provincial Councils.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- In the Provincial Councils ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, so this is the grant - iTaukei Affairs Board (\$5.2 million) and then you have the Provincial Councils (\$1.19 million), and over here I have got all the salaries.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- So it comes under iTaukei Affairs or the Provincial Councils?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- iTaukei Affairs also gives a grant out to the Provincial Councils and we also give Provincial Councils an additional grant to that. As I have said here, Naitasiri, for example, the Roko Tui had a salary increase of \$4,456. The additional amount is \$70,000 so we are actually paying that additional amount to cater for that increase.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Nawaikula?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I would like to move a motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Motion to amend.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Amend, three motions.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Just fill the form, please.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is filled.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- And then we will deal with it after. Any other comments on Activity 1?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 2.

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua, please.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- SEG 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 2. Honourable Ratu Suliano, please. We are on Activity 2. Honourable Ratu Matanitobua, Honourable Dr. Samisoni and then Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Programme 1-2 (7), Madam Chairperson; could the Honourable Minister update this House on the status of the computerisation of the Vola ni Kawa Bula (VKB)?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, what was he saying, I cannot understand.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- The status of the computerization of the VKB.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, this increase is to cater for the salary increase of the staff but it is the regular maintenance of this and this is for the reinstatement of the \$177,226 for the VKB, with an additional \$6,000 to cater for the salary increase of the staff.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni.

HON. DR. M.T SAMISONI.- Madam Chairperson, Head 5-2 (7), , can the Honourable Minister update this House on the status of Leadership Awareness and Implementation which has an ongoing allocation of \$40,000? How many more villages need to be covered and whether the programme is near completion as it started in 2011 which will be eight years from now? That is the question.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This is just a budget. We are talking about the amounts.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Yes, Head 5-1-2 (7).

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Leadership Awareness and Implementation.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, the Honourable Member is asking me to give her an update as to how it is going, where it is going, and all that? Madam Chairperson, I could furnish her the details later.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Alright.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chairperson, Programme 1-2 (10) – Demarcation of Un-Surveyed Lands and Survey of Un-Surveyed Lands.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Dulakiverata, I remember you asked the same question in the last Budget. This is a continuation of this particular programme. This has been there, including the Demarcation of Village Boundaries.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Programme 1-2 (5), we need an explanation on the Maintenance and Preservation of Native Lands and Fisheries Commission (\$32,000); how is that money used?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is for records and documents. Many of those records are very old and essentially it is the maintenance and preservation of those records and documents.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dr. Samisoni.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Head 5-1-3, Madam Chairperson, can I seek clarification from the Honourable Minister on the increase in the allocation for Cultural Awareness/iTaukei Festival (\$70,000)?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- On SEG – 10, why do you not combine the two and have Demarcation of Un-surveyed Lands (\$216,212) and Survey of Un-surveyed Lands (\$176,157)?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What is the question?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Why can you not just have it under one Activity as Survey of Un-Surveyed Land. I thought all the lands have been demarcated but not surveyed?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, but Honourable Member, you know this as a surveyor, that sometimes to be able to get the demarcation, there is a lot of different points of view. You have adjoining landowning units, so they need to sort that out. Today, I had someone from Naitasiri inside here in Parliament, complaining to me about how the other landowning unit has actually encroached on their land and they have gone on to some lawyer and had to pay \$5,000 and until today, they have no resolution. So the fact of the matter is, some of those demarcations need to go down to the ground.

Traditionally, someone would say, “Alright, from that creek, that point to that rock, this is our area. That is how people have traditionally done it and some of them have not been surveyed, you know that. This is why they need to do that. And then once you have got that right variation, then they have to go and survey it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We move on to Activity 3, any comments?

Activity 3, SEG 7.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Programme 1-3 (7), Cultural Awareness/i Taukei Festival which was tagged at about \$70,000, can we have some clarification, Honourable Minister?.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, this is an increase of \$50,000. It used to be \$20,000 and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs have actually asked for an increase because it is working out to be successful. They go out and have this festival, it is obviously creating an awareness in particular, with the youth so that is why they have asked for an increase, to create more awareness.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are there any other comments on Activity 3?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Madam Chairperson, Head 5-1-3 (5) – Books, Periodicals and Publications (\$20,792). Madam Chairperson, can I seek clarification from the Honourable Minister on the increase in allocation for this SEG by \$10,792. What is the increase for?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- There is an increase of \$10,000, it has gone up from \$10,000 to \$20,000. It is to accommodate the increase in the advertising cost of vacancies, publication of brochures, newsletters, printing of official documents, the cost of operational plan and other awareness programme materials.

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I have some recommendations here for amendment.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Madam Chairperson, SEG 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG 7.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- I had asked this question last year about the Cultural Mapping Programme. Has there been any publication on anything like that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- My apology, Sir, once again, please.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 1-3 (7) – Cultural Mapping Programme.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- They have already collected, for example, Lomaiviti Province between 2000 and 2009 and they obviously need to verify it. This year the information collated from the following districts of Lomaiviti Province will be verified, which covers about 70 villages all the way from Levuka, Lovoni, Bureta, Moturiki, Mudu, Cawa, Batiki.

They go from village to village essentially and do the Cultural Mapping Programme. They obviously then have to verify it because sometimes people have objections claiming, “This is mine” or “it belongs to someone else”. It is a fairly drawn out process and it is a slow process, but nonetheless it has to be done.

The records obviously are kept with this particular group that does go out and do it. It would be amiss of us to publish it publically when the verification process has not been completed.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We will move on to some proposals for amendments here. I am looking at these proposals, I am bit baffled because when we did the Budget debate, you were complaining that the debt level is too high. It looks as if you want to increase.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can it be taken out from somewhere?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, Madam Chairperson, in relation to the ones that is in your hand....

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- These are big amounts - \$6 million, \$70,000.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I can explain.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Can you identify exactly where you take it away from?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Go, go. You want to be in bed soon, go.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It will be taken from Head 23 – Ministry of Housing.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No, no, let us deal with just this Head.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You complain about Housing, now you want to take money from Housing.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We look at just this Head 5.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Or it has to be taken from within?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- If you want to take any money, move the money around, it has to be from Head 5 only.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The amount I am proposing there is \$5 million and where to take it out from, is the allocation for Housing in General which is about \$40 million.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Oh, no, no.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- From another Head.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Let us work on this Head only.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Within?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, within.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Alright, then I am wrong.

(Laughter)

No, there is one there.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- So, \$6 million and \$70,000, this is just a bit...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I withdraw that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- And \$70,000?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The last one on Intellectual Property.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- On Intellectual Property.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You want to increase and take it out from where?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Cultural Awareness/iTaukei Festival no use, better use for the collection of intellectual property. Programme 1, Activity 3, SEG 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There are two amendments. Do you want to take it out of the Cultural Mapping?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Cultural Awareness/iTaukei Festival - \$70,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- And put it into Intellectual Property?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes, an item in SEG 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There is a proposal for amendment here, there is only one. He wants to do away with the Cultural Awareness/iTaukei Festival. Do you have a seconder?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Yes, I will second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Would you like to speak on this?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes. Madam Chairperson, the motion is for that amount of \$70,000 to be included as an item in Programme 1-3 (7) to replace Cultural Awareness. Therefore, you will have an item there for Intellectual Property. Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge is very important.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Before we talk about Intellectual Property, first, can you speak on why you want this Cultural Awareness/iTaukei Festival removed?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I have already said it, it is no use.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- So, we need people's approval on that one first. Firstly, that one to be deleted, is it?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes, or increase it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- \$70,000.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Either way.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- And you are seconding it.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Yes, I second the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All right, we will put it to vote then. Can you all have a look at this particular allocation for Cultural Awareness/iTaukei Festival? Honourable Nawaikula wants to take it out altogether.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes, I will speak on it and you can vote.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, you do not need to speak on it.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, I think the way to deal with the motion as far as my understanding is, the motion is moved, seconded, then the mover of the motion speaks on the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- He has already spoken on it.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- We are voting now?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Well, if anyone else wants to support or not support, otherwise we vote.

We will put it to vote that the \$70,000 be deleted from the Cultural Awareness/ĪTaukei Festival.

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

The motion is defeated.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Now, you want to put this \$70,000 to a new line which is the Intellectual Property and Traditional Rights, do you have a seconder? Can you speak on this motion?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Chairperson, this is very important. You will see that in the allocation for the Attorney-General, they are now preparing a law to protect cultural and intellectual property.

Intellectual property refers to old stories, motifs that...

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Apologies, you have no money because this \$70,000 has not being agreed to. So, you have no money to put in there.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Then why did you ask me to talk, Madam Chairperson.

(Laughter)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Apologies, Honourable Nawaikula. Every time I look at you, I am baffled. Thank you, I apologise for that.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Can I seek some clarification from you? When we move a motion to increase or decrease and we speak on the motion and give the reasons, it is not for us to tell you where we will get the money from or subtract, it is not our job. Our job is to move a motion and if the motion is voted out, that is fine.

We are looking at the total budget and you can expect an increase or decrease. That is what we should deal with, either the Government accepts it or rejects it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- I disagree with you. If you want to make an amendment, you find it from within. You find the money from within the same Head.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, no, we are not the Government, the Government is on the other side. They have put the budget, we are saying that we want this budget to be increased and we will give you a reason. It is for the Government to reject that motion. And if they accept that motion, then it is the responsibility of the Honourable Minister for Economy and the Government.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, if they accept, but they have rejected.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, but that is how the process is. We move a motion for increase or decrease, the Government accepts it or not, that is where the matter ends.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- It has been defeated.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is alright but I am just clarifying the procedure. We do not have to explain it to you where the money is supposed to come.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, can I say that we do not rely on Honourable Professor Prasad's analysis on this. Can we ask the Secretariat, please look at the Standing Orders. It is very clearly stipulated as to how motions can be put, amendments can be sort. If they can provide that clarification based on the Standing Orders, we will follow whatever is in the Standing Orders. I do not want to rely on them because their representation is generally incorrect, so if we can just follow the Standing Orders, please.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chairperson, if I may, Standing Order 100 is very clear on the Procedure on Estimates during Committee of Supply.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, the amendment has been sorted out so we are now putting the motion to table for a debate. It has been proposed and seconded, and then it was voted on and defeated.

He had already mentioned that he did not agree to this Cultural Awareness/iTaukei Festival. He says it is useless. That was what he said.

HON. MEMBER.- He should withdraw that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- But he has withdrawn, anyway.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Alright, if withdrawn then that is another matter.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- So, Parliament will now vote on Head 5.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount in Head 5 – Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the Head is therefore agreed to.

Head 5 - Ministry of iTaukei Affairs agreed to.

We will move on to Head 6.

Head 6 – Ministry of Defence and National Security

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We are looking at Programme 1, Activity 1; do you have any comments on that?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chairperson, looking at Head 6-1-1(5) - Search and Rescue Services (\$300,000). Just an explanation from the Honourable Minister, given the example that we have just had whether that is sufficient because I intend to move a motion on that to increase it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The allocation has been increased by \$100,000 and that is sufficient for this allocation. It was \$200,000 for this year, next year it is \$300,000.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Thank you for the explanation. I just realised the process was followed in the last plane crash. It really took a long time and then they called off the search - intermittent stops, I think due to the fact that they did not have the manpower and the resources. It is so sad that this kind of situation, had it been discovered earlier, and I intend to move a motion to increase by \$500,000.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- That is not true, Madam Chairperson. It was due to the weather condition, that the search and rescue was not able to find the wreckage and the bodies because of the bad weather conditions.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Not only that, Madam Chairperson, there are other searches at sea. We are an island nation. There is a vast span of sea and there will always be a search out in the sea. I still intend to move a motion, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Can you fill the form, please? Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chairperson, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 - Fiji Day Celebration. The amount has been increased from \$100,000 to \$250,000.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You what to amend that, you want to increase or decrease?

HON. P. SINGH.- I am just seeking clarification.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Why the increase?

HON. P. SINGH.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Increase, Madam Chairperson, is the proposed Fiji Day Celebration will be held at Subrail Park in Labasa. So that is the reason for the increase of \$100,000 in this allocation.

HON. P. SINGH.- And the second one, Madam Chairperson is Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 - National Security and Defence Review, is it an ongoing item?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Chairperson, that is correct. It has been increased by \$124,071. It is ongoing and this Unit will hopefully be in the 2019-2020 Budget, it will be a stand-alone Unit.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments? Thank you, we move on.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 8 – Relocation of 3DP Coastal Radio Station. Can the Honourable Minister give an explanation, please?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister ?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Chairperson, the project involves the relocation of the 3DP Coastal Radio Station from the Togalevu Training Base to Nakula Street, Lam; i and also the Rescue Co-ordination Centre and Hydrography Services from Walu Bay to Lami. This should enhance radio transmissions to mariners making Fijian Waters a safer environment for seafaring.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes, Leader of the Opposition?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 4. What is the relationship between the Maintenance of National War Memorial (\$25,000) with the Continuation of National War Memorial Project – Phase 5 and 6?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Chairperson, SEG 8 - Continuation of National War Memorial Project – Phase 5 and 6, that has been reduced by \$200,000 and the completion of this National Memorial Project in Veitu. SEG 4 is for the maintenance of that National War Memorial (\$25,000).

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anymore?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will have a look at Honourable Karavaki's motion on Activity 1, SEG 5 to be increased by \$500,000. Would you like to speak on your motion and in that speech, please identify where you will get that \$500,000 from? On the same SEG, same Activity, same Head.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chairperson, I am just absolutely convinced that there should be an increase of \$500,000 in this. This \$300,000 allocated here is too small compared to the search that is normally conducted.

If it is a search to be carried out at sea, this always involves the hiring of planes in order to quickly resolve the situation and give some opportunity for saving those who are being searched. That is the reason why Madam Chairperson, I am proposing that there should be an increase. But for me to find where to get this from, I believe that we should look at Head 50 to be able to

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone else want to speak? This has been seconded.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- I think, Madam Chairperson, let the Government find the money.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- It has already been increased, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Salote Radrodro, do you want to speak on that motion.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I just want to assist Honourable Karavaki. It is on Head 50, SEG 8, Item 4 - New Office Complex for the Office of the Prime Minister. We can get the funds from there. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Different Head.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Head 50, is yours, is it not?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Madam Speaker, but we object.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All right. You have spoken on this. You want to speak on this same motion?

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Yes, Madam Chairperson, on SEG 7 – UN Military Advisor.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No, no. We are still on this motion. The motion is there on the table. We will vote on this motion. All those who are in agreement....

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Can I say something?

Madam Chairperson. I support the motion. I remember a case a couple of months ago where one of the ferries was stuck on a reef near Levuka. It was very distressing that they could photograph what was happening and they sent it to the people by phone and they just sat there for hours. You can imagine, if the people back home were watching scenes from within the boat of uncertainty and you know it went on for hours. I would have liked to see a helicopter hovering over the boat, giving them comfort. I mean this is normal in other countries so you know, those ferries do not carry five or six passengers, they carry hundreds.

Lately one of the ferries had to travel back to Savusavu on reverse gear, carrying cars, carrying all sorts of things, so it gives a lot of comfort when you, given the technology today, you can see it on the phone. A relative showing you what is happening. Can you imagine how distressed people are? The idea has merit and we have to be seen to be on the spot right away. That Levuka one took hours, Madam Chairperson. So I am all for increasing this and having a sense of assurance immediately, once they get stuck. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Does anyone else want to contribute?

We will now vote on this motion that Head 6 be increased by \$500,000 in Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 with respect to Search and Rescue Services and that the \$500,000 be obtained from Head 50. All those who in favour say 'Aye' and against say 'No'.

(Chorus of 'Ayes' and 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The 'Noes' have it. Thank you

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- SEG 7 – UN Military Advisor (\$400,000), why do we have to pay for this Military Advisor? Why does it have to come out of the Fiji Budget to pay for this SEG?

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- Because he is a Military Officer based in our Mission in New York, who deals with the Department of Peace Keeping (DPK) for our peacekeepers.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- He is Fijian.

HON. RATU I. KUBUABOLA.- He is Fijian, he is a Military Officer. It was Colonel Gadai, now the new one is Colonel Motufaga.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Parliament will now vote on Head 6.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount of Head 6 - Ministry of Defence and National Security be approved.

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the Head is agreed to.

Head 6 - Ministry of Defence and National Security agreed to.

Thank you, Honourable Members, we will move on the next Head.

Head 7 – Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments, if any?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 - Apprentice Scheme – Other Industry (\$400,000) and also Training which is \$20,000. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister, clarification on this Apprentice Scheme and the Training on SEG 5?

HON. J. USAMATE.- The Apprentice Scheme, Madam Chairperson, is the one that is organised by the NTPC. This fund is basically put in place where Government tries to sponsor apprentices in Government, so it pays for the wages of those apprentices in Government to join their Apprenticeship Scheme. That is what the fund is for.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Clarification on the National Training Productivity Centre Levy, is that the one or just the training?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Chairperson, it is the Training which is \$20,000, can we have a clarification from the Honourable Minister?

HON. J. USAMATE.- That is training for staff. Every now and then, there is training that is required, so this will meet for those in-house training of staff.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 2.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- In Programme 1, Activity 2, SEG 5, there was an allocation of \$65,000 for the Wages Council in 2017-2018 and again \$45,000 in 2018-2019. Can the Honourable Minister confirm whether the Wages Council was convened last year and will the Wages Council convene this year?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Currently, the Wages Council have not been used for a number of years now and what methodology has been used has been to hire a consultant who carries out the analysis of wages. He does the surveys and consultations with all the tripartite stakeholders and that is taken up to the Employment Relations Advisory Board. That has been the mechanism that we have been using and that is what this fund is being used for. We will now be looking for further refined mechanisms on how we can revise the Wages Council in the future.

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

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Activity 3?

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chairperson, Activity 3 SEG 7 - Workmen's Compensation. We note that last year it was \$2 million and this year it is \$1.75 million.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Workmen's Compensation.

HON. P. SINGH.- Workmen's Compensation on SEG 7, Activity 3.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Question.

HON. P. SINGH.- The question is: last year's allocation was \$2 million, this year it is \$1.75 (\$1,750,000), why is that?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Correct. This allocation is for Workmen's Compensation for Government employees. So it also depends on the number of cases that are seen, the number of cases for Government employees and then it will be processed from this particular figure. It will depend on the number of applications we have. So I think it will be from the basis of our staff, they are looking at the number of Civil Service applications for Workmen's Compensation on that, basically these figures are put in place.

For the new cases that come in the future, it will go to ACCF where the NTPC levy that you find all over this Budget, a portion of that levy will be used for the new cases into the future, so this is just for civil servants, for the remainder of the year.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Prem Singh, do you have another question?

HON. P. SINGH.- The second question is related to the same, Madam Chairperson, we will also be looking at the junior doctors who have been hired to do 32-hour shifts who are employed within the Ministry of Health Budget. You said that it is for civil servants.

HON. J. USAMATE.- All civil servants.

HON. P. SINGH.- The entire civil servants?

HON. J. USAMATE.- The entire civil servants, so if a civil servant gets injured, this fund will pay for the compensation.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is a bit confusing what the Honourable Minister said. You said some of that Fund has gone to the Accident Compensation Commission.

HON. J. USAMATE.- From 1st January next year, the money that employers pay as levy, 1 percent of your gross payroll, 40 percent of that levy will then be taken up by the ACCF for the payment of worker's compensation from 1st January. This money that we have here is just for the compensation of civil servants.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So the Unit that you had ...

HON. J. USAMATE.- ... for the current one that are already in stock that we are already in-play.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So the Unit that you had in your Ministry, people are there to look after this?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes, they are still there because we still have 2,000 cases to deal with.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So all of them are going to stay there?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Still there.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Those that are not civil servants in your Ministry, do they come under this form of compensation?

HON. J. USAMATE.- No, this is only for the civil servants. So from now until the end of the year if someone in the private sector gets hurt or injured, the company will have to pay or their insurance if they are insured. If not then we have issues, that is where we normally have issues. Now that we have this new levy, you do not have to wait for them to pay you, you automatically take it out of the NTPC levy that will be reserved for that.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Even if there is no fault.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes, on a no-fault basis.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any more comments? Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- (Inaudible)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Activity 3.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Which one?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Head 7, Programme 1, Activity 3, SEG 3 - OHS Services. Can the Honourable Minister give an explanation on the increase in Travel and Subsistence?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister?

HON. J. USAMATE.- I know for subsistence, all meal allowances have gone up.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Sorry, I cannot hear.

HON. J. USAMATE.- All meal allowances for all civil servants have gone up, there has been a big increase, so that is right across Government.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- I understand.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Are there any other comments? Activity 3?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, Head 5, Activity 3, SEG 5 – OHS Training Equipment. What sort of training equipment are budgeted for in this allocation- (\$20,000)?

HON. J. USAMATE.- I do not have the list of the exact specific training equipment but we do a lot of OHS Training for others, outside. We have OHS Awareness Training and other training

programmes and I assume that they will be developing stretchers or other kinds of things if you want to train them.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, move on to Activity 4, any comments on Activity 4?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dr. Mere Samisoni.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- National Employment Centre , SEG 5 - how many times does the NEC Board meet annually? How much is the NEC Board sitting allowance per meeting? As the allocated amount of \$35,000 is too extravagant as Board should only meet to discuss policy matters and not operational matters, that is the question.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Which SEG? Can you say those questions again?

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- SEG 5.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes, one by one.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Oh, just one, there is only there. Head 7, Programme 1, Activity 4, SEG 5 - National Employment Centre: How many times does the NEC Board meet annually? How much is the NEC Board's sitting allowance per meeting as the allocated amount of \$35,000 is too extravagant, as a board should only meet to discuss policy matters and not operational matters.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Definitely, the Board should only meet to discuss policy matters. I am not too sure how many times they meet a year but I am sure they will meet at least twice a year. A lot of the members on these boards are actually Commissioners and Permanent Secretaries, for them there is no allowance.

If there are people that come from other agencies outside of government, then some allowance will be paid to them but I am not aware of the exact quantum of that allowance.

HON. DR. M.T. SAMISONI.- Yes, it says here (\$35,000).

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes, \$35,000 will cover for all those bodies.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Move on to Programme 1, Activity 5

HON. M. LEAWERE.- Activity 4, SEG 4 on Foreign Employment Services and Fiji Volunteer Scheme, can we have an explanation from the Honourable Minister on SEG 7, Activity 4?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Foreign Employment Service (FORES): there has been a slight increase, and that is Job Evaluation increase for 17 FORES staff. Is that the \$13,000 that you are talking about?

The other major increase that we have, not for foreign employment but for seasonal work. So, that is the increase in that, and the other bit that we have there is the Seasonal Work Programme, that is a new allocation.

For Foreign Employment Service, the \$13,000 increase is for the Job Evaluation Increase.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Let us move on to Activity 5 now.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Can we just get a clarification from the Honourable Minister on these expenditures that are listed on SEG 7: The Singapore Mediation Centre Training, what are these related to?

HON. J. USAMATE.- One of the initial mechanisms that you use to resolve any industrial dispute is mediation, where we have trade mediators that bring together the aggrieved party and the employer and we try to mediate a solution. So, every year we run this Mediation Centre Training to get our mediators trained and we are not only doing it for our own Ministry but also for others in other areas where there is good use for mediation, for instance, in the Ministry of Lands or Ministry of iTaukei Affairs where you have disputes with landowners, we also get them to be trained in the skills of mediation.

Mediation is now widely used. We have the Fiji Mediation Centres being used at the courts, used in Consumer Councils and also used in our Ministry to try to resolve those disputes.

Also, there is the AMAC (Asian Mediation Association Conference), something that we are a member of. Also there is the cost for the associate fees and mediation licence for the programmes that we run, so it is something that we push very strongly - mediation.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.-Activity 5 SEG 1; this is a specialised area but it seems like there is no increase in the movements in SEG 1.

HON. J. USAMATE.- The number of staff has been the same and I do not think there has been a change too in their salaries as a result of the Job Evaluation.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on to Activity 6. Any comments on Activity 6?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

Thank you, Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on Head No. 7.

Question put.

The question is:

That the amount in Head No. 7 - Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations, be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

There being no opposition, the Head is therefore agreed to.

Head 7 - Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations agreed to.

Head 8 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Programme 1, Activity 1 - any comments?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7; Madam Chairperson, on the United Nations Human Rights Elections, is this the Council where the Americans lately pulled out of?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, this is the Human Rights Council. There is only one Human Rights Council under the United Nations.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- The Americans pulled out of this last week or last month.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I am not aware what the Americans are doing but if they have pulled out, they pulled out. They are pulling out a lot of things.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- It was a major global news, Madam Chairperson.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It does not affect

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- For the first time since the beginning of this Council the American pulled out last month. It made news worldwide, is this the one?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So, Madam Speaker, as I have said, there is one Human Rights Council under the new banner....

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- That is the one, all right. I have got my answer because I need to move a motion on this, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All right.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, I just have to say that our ability to stand on the Human Rights Council is not affected by one country pulling out. If that is what the Honourable Member is trying to suggest.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- We can argue that in the motion, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 2, Activity 1, any comments?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- SEG 8, there is an allocation of \$1 million for the Upgrade of Wellington Mission. If I remember correctly, we were supposed to sell all the missions. I think it was in 2015 Budget or 2016/2017 Budget. So, what has changed now, are we still pursuing the sale of mission or.....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, it is not as maverick as he tries to make it sound. We had said that we were talking to FNPF in respect of trying to sell those assets to FNPF so we still keep it within Fijian hands and that they do the maintenance, et cetera, and we simply pay them a rent and they get a good rate of return, so it will be beneficial to the FNPF members.

There has been some issues in respect of some of the land because some of the land that has been given to us were given as a grant. For example, in India now, there was huge land that was worth, I understand, in excess of \$18 million, they are giving it to us as a grant but there are also taxation issues.

There was also matters related to the ability to transfer that land, and so that we still working through those.

The reason of course we have allocated \$1 million here is because we do own this land and as highlighted in the Budget Speech and also the session if Honourable Prasad cared to come to that were actually explained in detail and the Wellington as you know, is earthquake prone. So, the buildings is actually cracking and falling apart. We need to build a new building altogether and meet the various size and requirements that the Wellington Municipal Council actually imposes upon us.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ro Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- SEG 6.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No , SEG 6, Programme 2, Activity 1.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Programme 2, Activity 1, you are behindás usual.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, we have the proposal for amendment from Honourable Gavoka:

That Human Rights Elections be left out of Head 8, in respect of Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7.

Would you like to speak on your motion?

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

Madam Chairperson, as confirmed earlier, this is the Council that has been a major part of the United Nation for years and the Americans have been part of this since the beginning.

Last month the Americans, pulled out of this Council and make global news made headlines because it felt that this Council was not doing the job that it was supposed to be doing. It was mostly targeting Israel, a small country and if you watched the news, Madam Chairperson, the UN's representative in the US said that almost of 80 percent of the time of the Council was spent on Israel. But human rights violations were happening in other parts of the world and they try to plead with the people to also look at Sudan, look at Yemen, look at other places in the world - Iraq and Syria, but still they continued to hone in on Israel. And the Americans say, "Alright, we will get out of it."

Madam Chairperson, we should not be seen to be jumping in into the Council when it is in a state of flux as it is right now.

Madam Chairperson, Fiji is a very small country, I think we should sit this one out. Let us not get into it because right now, you either belong to the Trump Camp or against the Trump Camp. And we are too small to be involved in something this big.

Madam Chairperson, only last weekend in Korea, the Chairman of the UN Climate Fund had resigned after a very stormy meeting. He is an Australian, his name is Howard Bamsey. The fund for the UN Climate Funds is down to \$2 billion, it is dwindling. It was a very, very stormy meeting in Korea. I know he resigned for personal reasons but this is an indication of the power of the Americans because when they pull out of the Climate Fund, that is what happens.

Traditionally, America is our allies. I know we are now saying that we are friends with everyone but to be prudent, being a small country like us, let us sit this one out. Let us not jump into it.

I may just remind the House, Madam Chairperson, that once Americans pulled out of the Iranian deal, a lot of people were not happy but the European companies knew that if they do not, that they could be locked out of America if they continue to do business with Iran. That is the power of the Americans.

Fiji being such a small country, we cannot afford to get into the fray. So, Madam Chairperson, I would ask the House if they can just take this away, do not contest this election in October 2018. Do not contest it, just sit back, sit on the fence and make friends both sides.

If you look at Page 53 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this is what it says, and I quote:

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for carrying out Fiji’s foreign policy agenda by maintaining and deepening Fiji’s diplomatic relations.”

By going into this, you will be upsetting a major ally of this country and we are a tiny country, Madam Chairperson. So please, I urge everyone, “Let us pull out of this, let us not get into it, it will be more harmful to Fiji.” Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Madam Chairperson.

Madam Speaker, this is the tragedy of the Opposition. They have such a dichotomous approach to everything. The way they view ethnic relations, the way they now view foreign relations.

Just because the US has taken a particular position, suddenly the Human Rights Council apparently is irrelevant and immaterial. He fails to address the fact that there are many American allies that are still part of the Human Rights Council. Many of them, European countries, countries in Asia, India, various other countries, are all part of the Human Rights Council.

Madam Chairperson, the fact of the matter is might is not right always. And Madam Chairperson, we believe we stand tall. Just because we are a small country, it does not mean, therefore, we act like cowards. He just said; “Awh, because they are bigger”. Madam Chairperson, we are not cowards, we take a principle position.

Madam Chairperson, the fact of the matter is, that all other countries in the United Nations family have all remained with the Human Rights Council, including the allies of USA. Everyone also knows that this new agenda of USA is being driven by the new President.

So Barack Obama did not withdraw, other Presidents did not withdraw, George Bush, et cetera, they did not withdraw, so suddenly it was alright. It was cool to be in the Human Rights Council, but we are approaching this from a humanitarian perspective. Whatever motions are coming in the Human Rights Council, et cetera, Madam Speaker, that is not the issue at play.

Our Honourable Prime Minister has probably had the most deepest relationship with Israel, and everyone knows that. He has met with the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. The Israeli Embassy in Australia which is accredited to Fiji, has a very close relationship with the Honourable Prime Minister. So by going into the Human Rights Council which supposedly, the Honourable Gavoka seems to intimate that by us going there will become anti-Israel, is nonsense. It is absolute nonsense!

Again, this is such a dichotomous approach. It is black and white approach just because Trump has decided to do that, therefore, we should withdraw from it too.

So Madam Speaker, the world is not black and white. There is right, there is no wrong, there is discussions and there is *talanoa* which we have introduced to the global forum, and everyone has embraced the *talanoa* spirit. It is now happening in the Climate Change forum. We can do that also in the Human Rights Council Forum, Madam Speaker. It is unbelievable that this motion has been brought about, simply because of that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

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

On this occasion, I do not agree with the motion. I think it would be good if Fiji does become a member of Human Rights Council, but let me also say this, Madam Speaker. It is very important for us, I mean, we can punch above our weight, but it is not always the right thing to do if we do not look after ourselves here and we know that we do not have a Human Rights Commission now. This Government or the appointing authority and the Honourable Attorney-General should be responsible for it. We do not have any Human Rights Commission, their term had expired.

The United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, when he visited Fiji, he questioned the independence of the Human Rights Commission and its Director. So while we support Fiji's bid to become a member of the Human Rights Council, we believe that the Government should also be mindful of what we do here.

The Human Rights Council has had members, who have been the biggest violators of human rights, in comparison to some of them who have sat in those Councils, we are probably much better. But we need to also be aware of our own position here, Madam Chairperson. So that is the point I want to make.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, do I have the chance to respond to that?

Madam Chairperson, I did not realise that it will spiral into this, sort of, domestic issue, but the fact of the matter is that Fiji has given an undertaking to ratify what we call the nine big Conventions. This Parliament has already approved the ratification of seven of those, and in fact, Madam Speaker, the other two are, if we have the time this time around, we would have actually referred it to Parliament. The other two will get done, so all our nine obligations would have been done.

Madam Speaker, the reality is that, by us and Parliament agreeing for the ratification of these big nine Conventions, it actually automatically requires the national Government to put in place domestic laws, if necessary where applicable from those Conventions to be translated into domestic law. As for example, we have done with the Disability Convention.

Madam Speaker, therefore, Honourable Professor Prasad to talk about those issues, the Commissioner is not there, the Constitution Offices Commission actually appoints the Commission and once they meet, they will actually appoint that. And, of course, Madam Speaker, we have always been open.

When was the last time a Human Rights Commissioner came to Fiji? When was the last time any Government invited every year a UN Special Rapporteur? In other words, Madam Speaker, we are lot more open to discuss and indeed, have criticisms. He should stop harping on about it.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is not the point. The point is, he made the recommendation and the fact is that, there is no Human Rights Commission and it is a reflection on the arms of Government which should facilitate the Constitutional Commission to appoint the Human Rights Commission.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, their term expired in May. It is now the month of July and it will be done.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Chairperson, I am just thinking about the motion by the Honourable Gavoka and I was thinking if we are going to take that motion that at any time the US does something that we should follow suit, given the fact that they decided to go out of the Paris Climate Agreement, does that mean we should give up fighting for climate change? If we continue that kind of logic, it is completely illogical. As a country, we need to stand on the things that we need to do as a country rather than just follow big nations around, so that is my contribution to the debate.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. We will now vote on this motion that the UN Rights Elections under Head 8-1-1(7), all those in agreement say 'Aye' and those who disagree say 'No'.

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The 'Noes' have it.

Motion is defeated.

Thank you, Parliament will now vote on Head 8.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount in Head 8 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to.

Head 8 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed to.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on to Head 9.

Head 9 – Independent Bodies

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, as Members of Parliament have said, this is the last Budget for this term of Parliament. In terms of clarification that I would like to seek from perhaps, the Secretary-General or yourself, and I hope that the Government would have learnt from its experience over the last three years, I am sure they would want to leave a legacy as to how an independent body and in particular, the Parliament should be funded and who should make the submission for Parliament budget

because when you look at the Constitution and I do not hesitate, Madam Chairperson, to say that we have had a lot of interference from the Executive in the way Parliament is run and resourced.

I can go back to when the Parliament started when the Secretary General allocated resources to different political parties. That, of course, was terminated without satisfactory explanation and till today, we have not had proper explanation as to why that was done.

If you look at the Constitution which establishes the position of Speaker and the Secretary-General to Parliament. Section 79(10) says, and I quote:

“Parliament shall ensure that adequate funding and resources are made available to the Secretary General to Parliament, to enable him or her to independently and effectively exercise the powers and performs the functions and duties of the Secretary General to Parliament.”

The Secretary-General to Parliament is a constitutional office holder appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Constitutional Officers Commission. The clarification, I seek, Madam Chairperson, is ideally we would have had a House Committee or some Committee of Parliament, make the appropriate submission for the budget of Parliament. I am seeking clarification as to how this \$10.8 million was determined, and whether there was some kind of independence in the determination of the budget of Parliament because one of the principles of establishing a Parliament through a constitution is the sovereignty of Parliament and the independence of Parliament, the independence of the office holders of Parliament is also determined by the way in which they are funded. And the Constitution very clearly says “adequately resourced” so that the Secretary-General to Parliament can perform her duties independently, effectively and efficiently. So I need some clarifications as to how this \$10.8 million was determined.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, sorry, do you...

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- That the \$10.8 million is exactly the same as last year. The only reduction was \$197,000 because we had completed our capital works, otherwise everything is exactly the same as the past year.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, if I could provide clarification. It is interesting how Honourable Professor Prasad is not concerned about the Judiciary nor the other independent Offices...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I am going to come that. You answer the question about Parliament.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The same rule applies to all of these independent bodies. They do their own procurement, they do their own tendering and they do their own hiring. If the Honourable Member care to do a comparison between the provisions of Parliament and the Judiciary in the 2013 Constitution and the previous Constitution, he would see that these institutions also have financial independence in the manner in which they spend their own money.

Previously, Madam Chairperson, for example, in the Judiciary and even in Parliament, they are all deemed to be civil servants. They no longer are civil servants, they are recruited independently by the Secretary-General, who is the person responsible for this institution as far as financial accountability is concerned.

Now, Madam Chairperson, this is a new thing under the 2013 Constitution. The Secretary-General to Parliament then comes with her team and make a representation in respect of the amount of money they want to spend in the various areas of expenditure. We have those discussions and generally we have agreement and we allow for whatever expenses there are because at the end of the day, you cannot have the Secretary-General coming in and saying, "Actually, I want \$20 million and therefore I should get it because I am independent." It does not work that way. In the same way, the DPP cannot come nor can the Chief Justice, together with the Chief Registrar come and ask for astronomical amounts of money.

The fact of the matter is, Madam Chairperson, what the Honourable Member should be asking is once the money is allocated to them, firstly, is the money adequate to run the place? Secondly, once the money is given to them, do we interfere as to how they spend it?

That, Madam Chairperson, is something that does not happen. They fundamentally run their own show. If you look at all the other budgets prior to 2006 or even post-2006 until 2014, we did not have such a page, and that is the reason why we actually put it separately. And they go and essentially spend the money, who are they accountable to? They are accountable to the Auditor-General. The report comes to the Auditor-General and is presented to Parliament. We have absolutely no say in it.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I was not saying at all that whatever they asked they should get it, all I was interested in is whether the Office of the Secretary-General independently is able to determine what she needs for the efficient functioning of Parliament and the appropriate resources.

What I heard from the Honourable Attorney-General is that, she independently does that and we take that on board. But we feel, Madam Chairperson, that there should be a process within Parliament. I know in some Parliaments, they approve the budget for Parliament separately to the rest of the budget, so that Parliament's sovereignty always remains respected in a very independent way. So I am not sure for the future whether it is the House Committee which looks at the budget, makes the submission to the Secretary-General because we have made submissions.

Madam Chairperson, for the first two, we did not make submissions for the last one because we felt that the submissions of Members of Parliament or political parties did not make any sense. So, that is another issue. We are not complaining about that, as long as we are assured that the Secretary-General independently secures the resources that she feels is necessary and enough for her to run the operations of Parliament in an effective and efficient manner. And I am taking the Attorney-General's words and hope that there is interference in the way the Parliament functions are run because as I said, right at the beginning of Parliament, we are still aggrieved by that. Madam Chairperson, as a political party, we do not have an independent office, we do not have a base resource which most Parliaments as you know have, and I am hoping that this would be taken on board for the future.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, I have to comment on that because Honourable Professor Prasad appears to be, again, wanting to talk about political party and he ended up talking about that towards the end, about him not having his independent office, et cetera. The reality is, Madam Chairperson, it is the political parties I am talking about now. We are, 32 of us, we have the same office space as the Opposition does. We cram like sardines, Madam Chairperson.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- (Inaudible)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, no but he did talk about resources, so let me talk about that too.

Madam Chairperson, the fact of the matter is that, that is political parties. What we are talking about is, whether the Secretary-General has enough funding to run her institution and whether she is doing it independently. Is there an 'R'? No! Is there some kind of clarifications or some type of approval she needs to seek in terms of economy? No! The money is given to them, that is it.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- All right, accepted.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Accountability and transparency. Can you just confirm whether that is already established or there are plans to establish that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, we are on Head 9 - Independent Bodies, not Head 10 - Independent Commissions.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no other comments, Parliament will now vote on Head 9. The question is that the amount of Head No. 9

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Just a clarification on the Judiciary, there is an increase of \$14 million. Last year was \$54,000, now it has gone up to \$69,000. Can we get an explanation as to why the huge increase in terms of Judiciary?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- A number of reasons. Also, Personal Emoluments has gone up, they are hiring more people. There were increase in salaries, they have done their own Job Evaluation Exercise and there is overtime.

Capital construction, as you know that the new Nasinu Court House has started and \$8 million has been allocated to that. Upgrade of the Existing Court Complex is \$1 million; Extension of Lautoka High Court - \$3 million; Extension of Nadi Court House - \$500,000; relocation of Ba Magistrates Court - \$5 million; Rural and Small Time Courts Services - \$1 million, as you know we have done with that; Upgrade of Government Building Cell Blocks - \$500,000.

The renovation of the old Parliament complex in Veiuto - \$5 million, Madam Chairperson, as we have discussed with yourselves too that once more spaces is created in Government Buildings, more of the spaces will be made available for MPs and political parties. The idea is, eventually t once it is cleared out, the MPs can have their own offices for themselves individually as you find overseas. Each MP has their own office, that is the idea, but of course we cannot do it overnight.

The Judiciary has to be accommodated. The Veiuto complex was selected because of the fact that, for example, domestic cases can go to Veiuto; a lot more salubrious, the children can come and play when they have custody battles, et cetera. So, that is almost salubrious for that, eventually. The idea is to move most of the courts down there. So, this entire wing here can actually become available for Members of Parliament. That is the whole idea.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

Parliament will now vote on Head No. 9.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount on Head No. 9 – Independent Bodies, be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ‘Noes’)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- With no opposition, the Head is agreed to.

Head 9 – Independent Bodies, agreed to.

Head 13 – Independent Commissions

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- On the Accountability and Transparency Commission, I seek clarification on that \$500,000. It was zero in the 2016-2017 Budget but the allocation there is \$500,000.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, the Honourable Member knows as per the Constitution, the Accountability and Transparency Commission has to have their enabling laws. That law is before one of the Committees; you may recall that.

If you return to the Constitution itself, it actually talks about the enabling law. We cannot have this Commission sitting there without their enabling law with the powers, et cetera. So, that is why we are hoping that the Committee will bring it to Parliament and we can vote on it.

Through this Commission, once the law is in place, it also means that all of us in this Parliament, on a yearly basis, will have to make various declarations about our income, et cetera, and you will know if there are any significant changes. That is all that is required, not just us, but all those Permanent Secretaries. I think it is all the way down to the Director level, people who work as Directors in various Boards, et cetera. All of that is captured and all of your declarations will actually be managed through the enabling law by the Accountability and Transparency Commission. It also means that any member of the public on any given day, can go and get that information. That is the beauty of it and we would like the Committee to bring this law to Parliament very quickly.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Are you suggesting, in this session?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I am sorry.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Are you suggesting that in this session?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Obviously not. It will not be done. But we are hoping that when we come back again next year or this year whenever the new Parliament meets, we hopefully will carry it over because I understand the Committee has done its work and they are ready to file a report. Once they do that, we can go ahead with it.

MADAM CHAIREPRSON.- Thank you. There being no other comments, Parliament will now vote on Head No. 13.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount of Head 13 – Independent Commissions, be approved.

Does anyone oppose?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the Head is, therefore, agreed to.

Head 13 – Independent Commissions, agreed to.

Head 14 – Ministry of Disaster Management and Meteorological Services

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments, if any.

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 1, Activity 1. Honourable Parmod Chand?

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Chairperson, Head 14, SEG 10.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Which one?

HON. P. CHAND.- SEG 10.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 10.

HON. P. CHAND.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 10.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Alright.

HON. P. CHAND.- There is an allocation of \$1 million for Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation Fund which was the same in the previous Budget. In light of our climatic disruptions that are now beginning to be more pronounced, should we not increase its allocation in readiness for any other extreme weather events?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister, clarification, please.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. This allocation is usually deposited into the Prime Minister's Rehabilitation Fund once it is received from the Ministry of Economy but of course, Madam Chairperson, this accumulates every year if we do not utilise it. There is also an allocation under Head 15, Miscellaneous Services, for the same purpose, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Chairperson, still on SEG 10 - Upgrade and Maintenance of Evacuation Centres. Can we get a clarification on what centres?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chairperson, this issue has been raised a few times in this august House. We have indicated that Government will start the construction of proper evacuation centres and of course the upgrading of current facilities as well to meet the standards that is required for such centres, Madam Chairperson.

For this allocation, Madam Chairperson, there is a committee and they have already identified about 10 projects for this financial year and, of course, it is subject to finalisation. But there are about 10 projects that have already been identified to undergo this upgrade and maintenance work.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 7 - National Disaster Database (\$200,000) is the same amount from last year. Was there any work done and if there was any work done, what is the progress?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Yes, Madam Chairperson, this is a continuation. We all know, like the Ministry of Education and all the Ministries, are currently working on their databases. It is not only for our development purposes but, of course, it is a requirement as well in terms of our achievement of SDGs and other policy documents that we have ratified, such as the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement. So this is why we need this database, Madam Chairperson.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- SEG 5 - Board and Committee Expenses. Can you give an explanation on the functions of this Board and Committee?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chairperson, under the Natural Disaster Management Act, we have the National Disaster Council and, of course, we have three Committees as well under that Council. We have the Training and Awareness Committee, Risk Reduction Committee and the Emergency Committee. So that is the allocation given for the convening of such meetings, Madam Chairperson, when convened by the Chairs of the respective Boards and Committees.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

Programme 2, Activity 1 - Corporate Services, Meteorological Services?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- SEG 5- World Meteorological Day Celebrations.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 2, Activity 1, SEG 5.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- SEG 5 - On the World Meteorological Day Celebrations.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- On the World Meteorological Day Celebrations.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.-Yes, Madam Chairperson. Fiji has got the Regional Weather Office and because of that Madam Chairperson, we are also aligned to the World Meteorological Organisation and of course we want to host these activities as part of the World Meteorological Day Celebrations, Madam Chairperson, and that is the allocation of \$30,000 for that purpose.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Ratu Matanitobua?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Madam Chairperson, the Honourable Minister again, is the amount sufficient for ...?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.-Yes, Madam Chairperson. It is sufficient for the purpose.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We move on to Programme 2, Activity 2 - Ministry of Disaster Management and Meteorological Services. Any comments?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Programme 2, Activity 2, SEG 8.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG 8, yes.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- There is an increase to \$290,000 on the Upgrade of Outer Island Stations. The next one is Upgrade of Meteorological Facilities. Can we get an explanation on that increase, please and what other outer islands that are facilitated in this upgrade?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chairperson, our stations in some of our outer islands and of course for us to be, I think I did mention this, this morning. This Ministry is a very highly technical one with a lot of electronic equipment, Madam Chairperson, and this is why we need to constantly upgrade and of course have state-of-the-art technology as well so that we can always provide the best weather information when required and of course, the upgrade of the facilities as well. I did mention this morning that the Weather Office in Labasa is due for opening, Madam Chairperson, and of course the other facilities as well. We have already upgraded the one in Laucala and we will continue with the other stations that we have around Fiji.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

Programme 2, Activity 3 - Weather Forecasting Services.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- SEG 7. Can we have some clarification, Madam Chairperson on those ISO 9001? Who develops it? Is it done locally or someone comes in from outside where the allocation is \$25,000. Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chairperson, we get certified people from outside to do this work for us as a requirement under the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) standards.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any more comments?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- None. We move onto Programme 2, Activity 4 - Climatology.

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 2, Activity 5 - Hydrology.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- SEG 7 - Water Resource Investigation.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG 7.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- SEG 7 – Water Resource Investigation, can we get some explanation from the Honourable Minister? Thank you.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Yes, Madam Chairperson. The Hydrology Unit was shifted from the Ministry of Infrastructure to WAF and then it has been shifted to Meteorological Office for obvious reasons. In recent disasters we have had the Weather Office probably giving the weather forecast, but then there was a different Unit in a different Ministry doing the monitoring of the water levels. This is why in the allocation you will see about the rainfall and telemetry systems because we need to monitor this, Madam Chairperson.

On the Water Resource Investigation, Madam Chairperson, changing weather patterns, some waterways get dried during the dry season but of course, they pose high risk during intense rainfall. So this is the work of the Hydrology Unit. They go and investigate this and keep a record during extreme events on both ends; dry period and of course during the rainfall season as well. So they keep a record of the water level within the areas, Madam Chairperson. So that is the work undertaken by the Hydrology Unit as part of the Water Resource Investigation.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Madam Chairperson, looks like they are doing quite a lot of work. In terms of their travel and subsistence, is that allocation sufficient to assist them in their movement?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Chairperson, this is a very small Unit and of course, subject to probably in the next budget allocation, where we will look at the structure of this Unit within the organisation and probably then we will look at increasing the number of personnel and, of course, looking at the other resources as well. But it is a very small team now, Madam Chairperson, because when they made this shift as well from the various Ministries that I have mentioned, the whole Unit did not come. Some have been retained in WAF, some have been retained in the Ministry of Infrastructure, so we have a very small team in this Unit in the meantime.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no other comments, Parliament will vote on Head 14.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount of Head 14 - Ministry of Disaster Management and Meteorological Services, be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to.

Head 14 - Ministry of Disaster Management and Meteorological Services agreed to.

Head 15 – Ministry of Justice

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments on the Ministry of Justice - Programme 1, Activity 1?

HON. P. CHAND.- Madam Chairperson, Head 15, Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 8. I noticed that there is a \$300,000 allocation for Decentralisation of BDM Services. It was also in the previous year's budget, but the sum allocated was \$400,000, it has been reduced \$100,000, so can I get an update on this activity or if it is not being done, nothing is going to happen, it should be removed from here.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Chand, as usual does not know what he is talking about.

HON. P. CHAND.- I know what I am talking about.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, this is an ongoing programme. Decentralisation does not mean you do it once and you stop it. There are many parts in Fiji, so obviously,

we will open up offices in Sigatoka and various other places. This \$300,000 Madam Chairperson, will be used to open up three more new BDM offices and they will open in Nasinu, Seaqaqa and Rotuma. Every year we have a programme, it is not something that you do it once and stop it, you continuously do it because you need to have more and more places where BDM offices can be opened.

Madam Chairperson, if I can just highlight, as I have mentioned in Parliament before, and also the session which he did not attend, that with the \$1,000 that we are giving to the babies, a condition of that apart from the income threshold, is that they must register their babies.

A few years ago, we had something like 27,000 Fijians who did not have a birth certificate up to the age of even 50 or 55. In this way, in a few years' time, everyone will have a birth certificate at birth. No rushing off to BDM Offices just before school, then everyone goes and registers their child. This is a concerted effort to bring services to ordinary Fijians in remote places.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. SEG 7 - Anti-Corruption Activities, what is that?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anti-Corruption Activities (\$100,000).

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What do we use it for?

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- When we have Anti-Corruption Days and other awareness programmes we need to create. From a policy perspective, we also get invited, Honourable Member, as you know that because of Fiji's commitment and indeed, a practice now of Anti-Corruption measures, Fiji also now gets invited to be part of Peer Review of other countries. We have had teams from the Attorney-General's Office that have been invited, together with other countries to go and do a review of the compliance of other countries. Recently, they went to East Timor and they have been to various other countries to conduct that. That is what the funding is for.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG 6.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- SEG 6 - Is that an annual subscription of \$11,500?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chairperson, just one clarification; the Special Expenditure under Activity 1, are Items under SEG 7 here all come under Special Expenditure?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Which SEG?

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- SEG 7. If you look across on the other side, you see the Special Expenditure on SEG 7. Do they all come under that?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- The next question, Madam Chairperson, in SEG 9 - Purchase of Office Equipment and Furniture, given that there are other offices over there, this furniture goes to which Office, is it the Ministry?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- All the offices that come under the Ministry of Justice, so the Ministry of Justice now obviously have lots of offices which includes the BDM Office in Rotuma and various other places. So that is for the Purchase of Office Equipment and furniture for all the offices, because most of them have that, the new ones will not have that, some may need replacements, et cetera.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Prem Singh?

HON. P. SINGH.- SEG 7 - Refund of Revenue (\$50,000); what is this allocation for?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Refund of Revenue of \$50,000 includes paying back to members of the public that may have paid the Ministry legislative fees in case of withdrawal or dealing of a service. Sometimes they pay for a service and then they withdraw the application. So like money lenders, sometimes they put in application, pay the fees and then say, "Look, we want it back." We have quite a bit of that. So people do withdraw, that is just to cater for that because it is an expenditure, comes in as a revenue then it is expenditure we have to pay back.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Aseri Radrodro?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, SEG 5, the expenditure being set for Parole Board Expenses (\$10,000).

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Parole Board expenses.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes. I am sorry, what is the question?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The question is; is there a Parole Board in existence?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, we have approved the recent law that we have passed. The community...

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The community based?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, the community based one.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- This is Parole Board expenses.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I think it is \$10,000, is it not?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is not busting the bank. This allocation caters for meetings, Special Parole Board meetings which makes for recommendations to consider the part on a prisoner based on eligibility criteria.

My understanding this fits in with the recent law that we passed, the Community-Based ones because it is part and parcel of building up towards that because there is also a requirement of training, you will see that also reflected in the Budget of the Minister for Welfare as part and parcel of that too. It has got an allocation in that Budget.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- There is no Parole Board at the moment?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, we are going to have the Parole Board very soon.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, we will move on to Programme 2.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We plan for the future.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Fiji Correction Services, any comment?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 2, Activity 1.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- SEG 7.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG 7.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Programme 2?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 2, Activity 1 - Fiji Correction Services: Standby Arrangement for Rapid Deployment to Peacekeeping Missions. This is the standby funding that we have for rapid deployment. You will see these allocations being made to the Police where they are required so they need to carry out training for them. So, this is for the standby arrangement for deployment offshore.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- (Inaudible)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Fijian officers having to go offshore, they go to Africa and various other places.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- From the Corrections Services.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We have people from the Correction Services, Police also that go, and you will see the similar allocation for the police. We have been doing this now for a few years - we have made a specific allocation.

HON. P. SINGH.- Madam Chairperson, on SEG 8 - Upgrade of cemeteries. How many public cemeteries just come under Fiji Correction Services?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, I do not have the list of all the cemeteries but I can tell you what this money will be used for: Phase 1 Works will be for the landscaping of the New Extension Cemetery in Suva. The Cemetery in Suva is actually running out of space, so there is a little bit of land, and you will see some up on the hill. When you turn into Reservoir Road, on the left hand side (on the hill) you see it is being cleared.

Phase 2 is for Nasinu Cemetery, so that is for the clearing of that.

The projected \$400,000 again will be included later on in the next financial year to include Suva, Nasinu, also Balawa and Tavakubu in Lautoka. They will spill over in 2019-2022.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- The construction of the K9 Dog Unit, is it just for Naboro or Lautoka as well. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I will tell you exactly, they do have a dog unit I know in Lautoka also and they have obviously got where the need arises as you will see that specifically the 2017-2018 to date \$353,000 has been utilised which is the construction of a K9 Dog Unit in Lautoka and it has been completed and commissioned. Contracts for Labasa, Nasinu and Naboro K9 Unit have been awarded to a particular company. Four dogs have been purchased this year. Also, Madam Chairperson, this 2018-2019 funding to construct a new K9 Facility in Naboro to facilitate the breeding of dogs for the four FCS K9 dogs. So, obviously, we would not only be buying it, we want to breed them too. We need the pups, the mothers, et cetera, so we become self-sufficient in dogs.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- SEG 8 in terms of the demolition of Suva's Main Cell Block, whether that has started or what is the progress?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, the funding commenced in 2017-2018 for the structural assessment of the main cell block. To determine what action if any can be taken on the main cell block, engineering tests have been conducted which recommends an immediate demolition of the main cell block. To date \$72,000 has been utilised, all the preparatory works have been completed in this upcoming Budget. The demolition of the main cell block (MCB), the segregation of transiting blocks at the Suva Correction Services as the structures of these buildings are confirmed to be condemned.

The engineering test conducted is for buildings and recommended the immediate demolition. It is very old, concrete decay and need to be taken down and we can probably get more space and eventually build new facilities.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- The civil works - Naboro Correction Centre (\$2.5 million); is that the civil works for a new centre or existing?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, there is \$2.5 million. In 2017-2018, they started remedial works for landslide protection at the Naboro Medium Cell Block estimated at \$400,000 to construct a Gabian Wall. Now, the consultancy work has been completed and what will happen in this 2018-2019 is the construction of the Gabian Wall itself, the Medium Cell Block in order to prevent and stabilize the surrounding land from further landslides. The total cost of the project is estimated to be around \$4.5 million which is to be done in phases.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- SEG 9 - Naboro Creek Boulders (\$100,000); what would be the explanation on the use of those boulders?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.-The installation of boulders at Naboro Creek running adjacent to the Minimum Cell Block and the TMA Office main gate industrial farm, you can actually see this from the road when you go along. It is for controlling the flow of water during high density in rainy period. This high density rain periods encountered in this financial year has resulted in rising creek water levels which has overflowed onto the rest of the farms, causing severe financial losses to the Small Farm Business Unit and food security, as you know. Those gardens are not there only to supply food but they also make money from it.

There is a cause of major creek bank erosion, you can see that already, the fence is not there properly. To remedy these damages, there is a need to install these boulders above the major affected areas.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Dulakiverata.

HON. J. DULAKIVERATA.- SEG 9 - Installation of LAN/WAN; is this going to be installed?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, in 2017-2018, currently Fiji Correction Services is running on four cores. Two currently used for CCTV view from the main control centre and the other two cores are for the main data access from GOVNET.

In 2018-2019, the current fibre used is running overhead from the main hub to Suva, the Suva Women's Correction Services to the Suva Remand Centre.

In terms of national disaster such as hurricane and strong winds, the overhead fibre linking to these facilities, the main hub can easily be broken.

For security reason, the fibre installation is going to be secured by putting it underground. As we put all the cables in front of Nadi Airport all the way to Sheraton underground, well Nadi, Sheraton back road.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on to Programme 2, Activity 2, Penal Institution.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Madam Chairperson, I seek some clarification. Activity 2 is on Penal Institutions and SEG 8 is on Capital Construction, nothing there. Can the Honourable Minister explain why there is no capital construction when we all know that in Lautoka, the inmates there are already congested, even the toilets are falling apart?

In Suva, the inmates are sleeping along the corridors. They are basically being treated inhumanly, so we would expect capital constructions for the improvement of the Penal Institutions, so why not?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Speaker, if the Honourable Member would turn to SEG 8 in Programme 2, Activity 1 under General Administration, you will see that there is construction of, for example, Infirmary at the Lautoka Remand Centre.

Repair and Maintenance of Institutional Infrastructure (\$400,000); Electrical Upgrade Works, Civil Works - Naboro Corrections Centre; all of the major capital works are there in that General Administration Activity, that is where you normally find it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Leader of Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Activity 2, SEG 7; what is the relationship between those two programmes: Rehabilitation Programme (\$200,000) and the Yellow Ribbon (\$200,000)? Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, the Rehabilitation Programme is specifically to provide Counselling Service, Vocational and Skills-Based training to the inmates.

Yellow Ribbon, Madam Chairperson, is about educating and informing the communities so they go to various district levels, they go to the Provincial Council Meetings and the society at large, and create and have this outreach programmes in terms of reintegration of our offenders.

Madam Chairperson, as we know that only a few years ago, the recidivism rate in Fiji was 50 percent. Now 50 percent of the people who went to prison, went back again so we had a very high rate of recidivism and we have been actually reducing that. If you look at the current statistics the rate of recidivism has actually gone down because of Yellow Ribbon and because of the counselling services.

And also as you know, Madam Chairperson, we have a programme where they can actually earn money. If you look at the Poverty Alleviation Programme in the same SEG, we made a Cabinet Decision

in 2009 and this essentially, the use of this funds is that all inmates in the Corrections Services Commercial Programme are paid \$1 a day, out of the PAP funds. Inmates who are released are entitled to maximum of \$1,000 for any project which will improve their standard of living and enhance stability. It is only provided to inmates that have exhibited a desire to change and express good behaviour.

This is why the Rehabilitation Programme is important. They have the counselling, et cetera, and they need to have gone through the rehabilitation programme themselves, Madam Chairperson. They also go through business training before they are released under the NSCMED Scheme. There is a holistic approach to it.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Chairperson, just on the Rehabilitation Programme, for counselling, those are professional Counsellors?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Madam Chairperson. We have a Psychologist also there, I forgot the name of the lady, I think from my memory she is a lady, but they do get people from outside.

In the same way, Madam Chairperson, as you know, the Mercy Commission, people who actually apply have to go through those various counselling services to be able to see whether they can actually receive the positive outcome from the Mercy Commission too.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chairperson, on the same SEG, on the Poverty Alleviation, would the Honourable Minister explain how that is administered, whether it is the means of empowering inmates financially in preparation for their release? Normally, I hear this term only at the Ministry of Women and Poverty Alleviation, so that is why I asked, does this mean empowering them financially before they are released?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, Madam Chairperson. As empirical evidence shows, there are lot of people who are in prison. If they are not given the right tools before they are released and even upon release, then they can fall into the poverty trap because people may not necessarily hire them or give them jobs. They may not necessarily be psychologically ready to be released and they do fall into the poverty trap because sometimes many families do not actually accept them back because of the stigma. And perhaps because of the people they met up with in the prison system, then again they may resort to criminal activities again.

Perhaps, in hindsight, it may be that you do not get confused with the Honourable Minister Vuniwaqa's Ministry, it could be called something else. But I think in that sort of way, that is the reason why it was called the Poverty Alleviation Programme. But as has been stated, we do pay them \$1 per day so, at least, they have got something there, they got some money in their pocket. A lot of them do come into prison without a single cent so, at least, they leave with something.

They also, for example, are entitled to a maximum of \$1,000. For example, if they have been in prison, they have exhibited a desire to change and express good behaviour, a lot of them actually engage in various types of activities, like learning carpentry. You may have seen the exhibitions we have had through the Yellow Ribbon Programme with some of them making furniture.

If you go to the Art Gallery opposite Korovou, it is a fantastic Art Gallery. We have had tourists get off the boats and I want to thank people like Jane Ricketts, who actually contributed quite significantly to enhancing their talents, many a times, hidden talents of these inmates. And some of these paintings actually have been sold for a few thousand dollars and that obviously goes towards them. So that is the type of work that we are doing, and this is part and parcel of that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on to Programme 2, Activity 2.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Madam Chairperson, in terms of SEG 6, what is that? Some clarification from the Honourable Minister on what is that used for? Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- This, Madam Chairperson, is again State gratuities that are paid to all inmates upon their discharge from prison. The gratuities are divided into three stages; Stage 1 is applicable to those inmates who spend one year in prison and are paid \$2 per month upon their discharge. Stage 2 is applicable to those inmates who have more than two years in prison and are paid \$4 a month upon their discharge. Stage 3, this is the special stage for the inmate's good behaviour and is engaged in community work and are paid \$6 per month upon their discharge. This is another means of empowering them. Perhaps, it is a small amount but the fact of the matter is, they are getting rewarded for it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON,- Honourable Ratu Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- SEG 5, can we have clarification on the ration - \$1.9 million? We need an explanation on how these figures were arrived at and the calculation in terms of number of prisoners. Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, the question is, how is this calculated?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Explanation on how that figure is there.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- \$1.9 million?

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- For the ration, yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, this is the ration for whole of Fiji, for all the institutions. Next to that, you will see stores. Stores are different allocation obviously. Those funds are used to purchase general stores, beddings, utensils for inmates and also their operational staff.

Emergency stores in case of a natural disaster, needed operational stores too. Rations, essentially, is to do with food and as you have said, food supply is also supplemented by the various gardens that they have.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- On ration, prison dogs. How many dogs are involved in this?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I have highlighted the number of dogs. There were four dogs purchased in 2017 and two in 2018. Essentially, we are looking at, at least, six dogs and I would suspect that there would be a bit more than those six dogs. Those dogs eat a lot.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You do not have cats to eat the rats.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Sorry, cats.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Eat the rats.

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I do not know whether he wants some horses there too.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Parliament will now vote on Head 15.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Chairperson, please just on the pest control in SEG 5, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister whether that is sufficient because I do not know the reason why. It was just a report that I heard from one inmate in Labasa, saying that they could hardly sleep at night because of the bed bugs. I wonder whether it is because there was lack of pest control or you want to give it to them to eradicate this? I am asking whether this is enough or there was another reason, that is why they had the problem.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, I cannot comment exactly on what happened in Labasa but what we have been told by the Fiji Corrections Services that \$50,000 is ample for their requirements. If that is an issue you would like raise, we can pass it on to the Corrections Service.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Parliament will now vote on Head 15.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount in Head 15 - Ministry of Justice be approved.

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the Head is agreed to.

Head 15 - Ministry of Justice agreed to.

Head 16 – Ministry of Communications

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for any comments?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chairperson, where do you find the fees paid to Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (FBC)? Where is it shown in the budget?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, it is in Head 50.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chairperson, I would like to move a motion on Programme 3.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 1, Activity 1?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Program 3, Activity 1? You have a motion?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, I have a motion, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Programme 4, Activity 1.

HON. RATU T.N. NIUMATAIWALU.- SEG – 8, Madam Chairperson, we have an expression through this cable connection to Vanua Levu, can I have an explanation from the Honourable Minister, please?

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 3, Activity 1, SEG – 8.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Oh the cable, Honourable Member, you should be happy about this. You now will be better informed at a much faster speed and bigger bandwidth.

Honourable Member, I am not sure if you are aware when you were in Parliament, but Samoa was building a cable to land in Vatuwaqa to connect themselves to the Southern Cross Cable. And when the Samoa cable was coming through, it was going to go between Taveuni and Savusavu; the southern point of Vanua Levu.

Government, in its wisdom, decided to build a pipe out of that cable to land in Vanua Levu. It has landed already in Savusavu, we hope to have this commissioned by next month, in fact towards the end of this month and early next month, which essentially will mean that the internet speed in Vanua Levu will increase by 100 percent, the bandwidth will also increase too.

Traditionally, the data being carried to Vanua Levu from Viti Levu has been what they called through “microwave link” from one dish speaking to another dish. Microwave frequency does not travel very well over water but, of course, with the cable now, the next plan, we have already had discussions with Telecom Fiji Limited (TFL) because the cable has now landed in Savusavu. We are looking at the next three to four years to run a fibre-optic cable from Savusavu to Labasa which will mean an enormous opportunity, not just for business houses in Labasa and Savusavu and along the way, it will also mean for the ordinary Fijians getting much better connectivity, so this cable is for that.

We borrowed money from the World Bank to fund this essentially, and the project is now almost done. This is essentially the cable connection itself and associated costs with that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Prem Singh.

HON. P. SINGH.- SEG – 9, Digital Government Transformation (\$14.6 million), is it part of the \$6 million allocation in last year’s Budget paid to the Government in Singapore, in respect of providing a number of platforms?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Singh, if you had come to the session we had last week, we would have given you all the full details, but it is part and partial of that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- SEG – 10

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- New grant of \$19 million to Walesi, is that operational grant of that Walesi?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Honourable Member, you were there at that session when we gave you detailed submission by the Solicitor-General, who is the Acting Permanent Secretary for Communications and there is a cost breakdown. As you know, of the \$19 million, we have \$4 million operation expenses which includes payment for contractors, licensing cost, total rollout cost, OTT upgrade, provision for FIRCS tax and penalties, data inhouse project, village instalments, contingency fund, of \$170,000. All of these is part and partial of that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Programme 4-1, are there any comments? Honourable Professor Biman Prasad?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- A motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- We will move on to the motion. We have a proposal for amendment here by the Honourable Viliame Gavoka that:

Head 16 be increased by \$7,580 in Programme 3-1 (7) – Support for Local Movie and Literary Production from \$250,000 to \$750,000.

Do we have a seconder?

(Inaudible)

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- No, increase first then decrease after. Do you have a seconder? Do you want to speak on your motion?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes, Madam Chairperson.

While reviewing the Annual Report for Fiji Broadcasting Corporation (FBC), I indicated my suggestion that there should be a lot of more local content in the programming because all the *iTaukei* Programmes are local content and created here in Fiji, but most of the *Hindi* and English ones are imported. I made my suggestion that there should be more local content created in Fiji. We were told today that it is very expensive and that we do not have the expertise.

My suggestion here is to gradually get into it, gradually train our people and also increase the budget to enable our television station to create local content.

Last year, Madam Chairperson, I spoke about the Billy Cosby Show in the United States of America (USA) and spoke about it again in the Committee Meetings and the Fiji Sun ridiculed me for suggesting it because of Bill Cosby's, the cloud over him. But as you know, a lot of black Americans have said that they went to university to better their lives because of that Show. The Show was a black lawyer with this doctor black wife and something like that, we need in Fiji.

I mean, we have issues in Fiji that can be all captured in one locally produced programme. We have teenage pregnancy, we have bullying in schools and we have literary issues. You put together a good storyline and run something like that, well-created and well-produced, it could be money well-spent. That is the gist of what I am suggesting, Madam Chairperson. Thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Where will you source this money from?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Oh, I have to look for the money? Head 50, there is a lot of cushion there, miscellaneous stuff.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- From Head 50?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Government finds the money, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Does anyone want to speak in support of this motion.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The Honourable Attorney-General gets the first chance. No, no, I am just going to vote for you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, I would like to acknowledge the Honourable Member's passion for developing local content and, in fact, we are very passionate about it too. And he is absolutely right, there is a dearth of local made programmes that are of entertainment value.

However, we do have programmes like *Bati Ni Tanoa*, we do have other locally-produced programmes that he is talking specifically about *i taukei* Language programmes. There is one on FBC that talks about money matters, I forgot the name of the programme. Then, of course, we have other programmes on *Fiji One* where they bring in people and they also talk about various historical events.

He is right, there is no drama as such that has been developed. Of course, it would be striate of me to say but the fact of the matter is, you would not find *i taukei* programmes produced overseas and most *i taukei* people live in Fiji. And those who have migrated, I do not know whether they have the appetite to do so.

The intention of this was that, if someone comes out with a script to do a local movie or even TV production, then we can actually fund it. Also, the literary production is, we have had people, for example, who have said to us, "I have written a novel", and it can be a novel in any language, as long as it is written by a Fijian and we will also fund the publication of this.

Unfortunately, the uptakers have been very slow. We had a couple of people who had some books, they want it funded but in respect of the actual uptake of TV production or movies which have been very very slow. It is not an easy thing to do, we have to admit.

So, we are starting off and that is why we have got \$250,000. I think we all agree in this room that we have to do this or it needs to be done but just by adding another \$300,000 or \$400,000, it does not mean it will get done. The fact of the matter is, we need to spend this \$250,000, that is the point.

The other thing is, there are certain differences between USA and Fiji. In USA, the government does not give a Toppers Scholarship nor does it give TELS, or interest rate of 1 percent or zero percent or no more than 2 percent, the government does not. You have to go privately and get education funding and they burden with it for the rest of their lives.

But the fact of the matter is, Madam Chairperson, it is commended that we do get into this phase and we hope to also push it out more into the schools and universities. We have a programme that the Honourable Minister for Industry and Trade falls within his Ministry which is the Kula Film Awards. I suggest to the Honourable Members, the awards are coming up soon. The Kula Film Awards is not just about dance, they won nine awards for movie production and there have been short films made by high school students and precisely what Honourable Gavoka is talking about. Things like teenage pregnancies and family issues, et cetera, and some of them are fantastic programmes. In fact, some of that have already been shown, I understand on FBC so there is that opportunity.

Also we have a programme where those people who get the 47 percent tax rebate, when they have a movie production in Fiji, one of the requirements is they have to use students from the Fiji National University Audio Visual Unit. They use them in the movie production so they can get some exposure in training in terms of lighting, scripting and what have you in those various areas, so it is a holistic approach.

But as we said, it is a good initiative but we need more uptake of it and surely, if people do come forward with it, we can make more funds available.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- You know there is a group in Vanuatu - the One Small Bag, they have lasted years. We could have something like that.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I think they were funded by the Aussies,

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- You remember, Madam Chairperson, QVS used to do a play every year and they tour around the country back in the 1960s, Shakespeare, et cetera. What happened to that? We can revisit that and do it with modern stuff today.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I think after 1987, it stopped.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- It sounds very positive to have this.

Alright, we will vote.

That Head 16 be increased by \$750,000 in Programme 3-1 (7) with respect to support for Local Movie and Literary Education Production.

All those in favour say 'Aye' and all those not in favour say 'No'

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The 'Noes' have it.

Motion lost.

The next one is by Honourable Professor Biman Prasad:

That Head 16 be decreased by \$1 million in Programme 1-1 (5) - Qorvis Communication.

Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, would like to speak on the motion?

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

We talked about Qorvis activities before. The history of Government getting this PR firm is there before the elected Parliament. Obviously, Honourable Attorney-General at some point before said why they needed the PR firm and now we believe that after the Election, there is no need for a PR firm like that partly because we believed that Qorvis (and in fact I used the term Qorvis) are actually meddling in the affairs of Fiji.

Some of the things that we believe is coming out from the propaganda machine and we believe that is the Qorvis machine, exactly quiet misleading and we can give numerous examples of that, Madam Chairperson.

The other reason why I believe that it should be removed because Qorvis, I am told, is also the Public Relations Consultants for COP 23. We are told that they are paid \$4.6 million by the Government to do just PR activities for COP 23. So, it is like the case of double-dipping.

When you get \$1 million here, you got a contract for another \$4.6 million to do COP 23 but more seriously, Madam Chairperson and the Honourable Attorney-General can clarify this, is that the \$4.6 million that they are being paid did not go through proper tender process and whether the procurement regulations have been followed in this particular case.

This is the allocation that we believe should not be there and we need explanation from the Honourable Attorney-General as to whether this COP 23 allocation of \$4.6 million is also part of the total payment which includes the \$1 million allocated in the Budget, whether the tender process was followed to give them a contract, apart from the one that they have an allocation in the Budget. So, I need clarification and that is why I am saying that this \$1 million should be removed from the Budget.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Anyone else would like to speak in support or non-support of that motion?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, Honourable Professor Prasad has a habit of muddying the waters. Well, that is the problem.

Madam Chairperson, the Budget Estimates 2018-2019 is \$1 million. It has absolutely no relationship with the activities under the COP 23 Secretariat. The COP 23 Secretariat funding does not come from the Estimates of the Budget Allocation for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.

Honourable Member, does know there is a separate trust fund. Honourable Member, does know that we put on the table of this Parliament the funding and how the money was spent and who received the funding. One of the Committees heard the Secretariat CEO, John Connor, appeared before the Parliamentary Committee and answered all the questions. I cannot remember which Committee it was. He knows all of that has happened. He knows separate accounts have been filed for that yet he is bringing that issue into this. Obviously, Madam Chairperson, if you have an expenditure allocation in the budget it is separate to anything else that Qorvis might be doing.

Next thing he might be talking about some contract cohesion in some other country. So, Madam Chairperson, this is about the expenditure incurred in respect to using the services of Qorvis, that is what it is about. And yes, we have stated about the reason why they were hired in the first place. And yes, we believe that we currently need to use them.

Madam Chairperson, throughout the past two days, I have heard all of them go on about Qorvis, as if Qorvis is running the Government, as if all the ideas of Government comes from Qorvis, as if we cannot think on our own. They do not talk about the fact that Qarase's speeches were written by Matt Wilson, he used to charge \$10,000 or \$12,000 a speech.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- But he was local.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Oh, so local abuse is fine. There you go, there you go!

Madam Chairperson, this xenophobic idea is quite dangerous. These people want to live in a globalised world but look at their attitude. And they want tourists to come from Australia and New Zealand and then they only want locals; what is going on?

(Opposition Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, the point of the matter is this that this is a Government initiative, we believe it is relevant for the time being and of course like many things as we have changed, like golf, like various other things, we believe there is a certain amount of hand holding requirement or whatever it is, once that is over, we do not need them, then we will not need them. But at this point in time, as the Government, we have made a policy decision and the policy decision is that we will have this allocation for a particular purpose.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Chairperson, I think the Honourable Attorney-General has not answered the question. One of the reasons why I said that I want \$1 million removed from this allocation is the fact that Qorvis has already got a contract from Government for that \$4.6 million and whether that \$4.6 million is not enough for Qorvis to do services for the Government, or whether that \$4.6 million is separate and it does not come into the budgetary process and it does not come through tender process. What is the process that was used to give that additional contract in addition to the contract that they have for these million dollars? That is the question.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, again, see I have answered the question. I have said that this is separate to any contracts that Qorvis may have. And the Honourable Member does know that there are certain procurement rules pertaining to the users of the Trust Fund money for the COP23 Secretariat. Again I reiterate that the funding for the COP23 Secretariat is with the Trust Fund, it does not come from this, nor the previous one. And Madam Chairperson, this is a separate matter altogether.

This \$1 million has got nothing to do with COP23 Secretariat, how more clear can I be? You got nothing to do with the COP 23 Secretariat, Madam Chairperson, and this is not the time and place to discuss the terms and conditions or the scope of the work that Qorvis is doing for COP23 Secretariat. He could have raised that earlier on in different Parliamentary sessions, he could have done that and we could have gladly answered that. But he is raising it now again trying to create this ruckus.

This work again is separate to the COP23 work period. That answers the question, period, and this Madam Chairperson is specifically for the Fijian Government. The COP23 Secretariat is not just for the Fijian Government. Honourable Minister for Agriculture as a climate champion would tell him that, that COP23 Secretariat work is not just restricted to Fiji. It is a global initiative. Maintenance of various social media platforms, all sorts of things goes along with it. This is separate to this, Madam Chairperson.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So what you are saying is, that contract is not subject to the procurement rules, the usage of that trust fund is not subject to the procurement rules.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I suggest, do not try and be cute with me. The point of the matter is this. Do not be cute with me. Do not be cute. You know specifically that the trust fund usage is done through a separate law. Go read the law. It is not my place to teach you the law. You go, read the law and you see the procurement requirements for that. Madam Chairperson, again, we are not talking about the COP23 Secretariat Trust Fund spending, we are talking about this 2018-2019 spend.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, I am not withdrawing the motion. I still want Qorvis \$1million to go because you do not need that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is your right, do it.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Motion is not withdrawn and therefore, we will vote on the motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Chairperson, I am staggered. He is insinuating that even if we have a capable PR company in Fiji, he will still give it to a foreign company. That is the message I am getting. There are capable companies in Fiji who can do the work, the FijiFirst will still give it to someone from outside. Our primary responsibility is to look after our people. If they cannot do it then we go overseas. I think he has indicated that there are capable people in Fiji who can do this work. So, why Qorvis? Thank you.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, I want to comment on that. I did not at any point in time say there is no locals that cannot do the job. I did not at any point in time say, we did not

call for expressions of interest. I did not say any of that. He did not bother to even find out. That is the point. You see this is the problem. Half-baked truths, half-baked information. I never said that. Stop insinuating that.

The issue is that we have, through a particular process identified this company to do a particular type of work for us and that is what it is. Nothing to do with Fijians not being capable. In the same way, Madam Chairperson, some people when they used to work for Government or whatever, they preferred to fly to Air New Zealand as opposed to Fiji Airways. That is their choice. They preferred that airline. In the same way that if we are going to say let us buy a particular computer just because this company is from Fiji, and you have to pay three times the price or this computer is the end of life and therefore let us get it just because it is supplied by a Fijian company, that will be nonsense, a waste of taxpayers' money. So the fact is, nobody has ever said that.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you. Honourable Prasad to move that Head 16 be decreased by \$1 million in Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 5 with respect to Qorvis Communication. Does anyone oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Ayes' and 'Noes')

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, we oppose the motion. All those in favour of the motion.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All those in favour say, 'Aye'.

HON. MEMBERS.- Aye.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- All those not in favour, say 'No'.

HON. MEMBERS.- No.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Noes have it. Thank you.

Parliament will now vote on Head 16.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount of Head 16 - Ministry of Communications, be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to.

Head 16 - Ministry of Communications agreed to.

Head 17 - Ministry of Civil Service

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- The floor is now open for comments, if any. This is the last one.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Clarification, Madam Chairperson on Programme 1, Activity 1, SEG 1 and also part of that is in SEG 5. This is in regards to the Doctors Personal Emoluments and Allowance, Doctors – FNPF and Gratuities. Also on SEG 5, there is Doctors – Training.

Madam Chairperson, it is the Ministry of Civil Service and the narrative in this is, this is the Ministry to spearhead the Civil Service Reform and I am seeking clarification because out of the \$52 million for the Ministry of Civil Service, the doctor's salaries, FNPF, gratuities and their training comes to \$49.2 million and that takes up more than three quarters of the budget allocation. It is called the Ministry of Civil Service, but it seems like the Ministry of Civil Service is just being established to administer the personal emoluments for the doctors and this could easily just go to the Ministry of Health where it used to be before.

I seek clarification along that line, Madam Chairperson, because if it is the Ministry of Civil Service to spearhead Civil Service Reform, then the budget should be for that. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The Honourable Member said quite a few things. Just to put it into perspective, the doctor's salary out of that \$48 million consists of \$43 million, plus \$4 million in FNPF. There has been a decrease because this year, Madam Speaker, we had anticipated hiring a lot of specialists and we are having problems in hiring specialists from overseas because as we have been told by various international recruiting agencies, there is a shortage of doctors and specialists throughout the world.

I remember when we were in India and we talked about getting some specialists for Labasa. These doctors nowadays, Madam Chairperson, they obviously require lots of money but they also look at other lifestyle thing so they asked such things like, is there an international school in Labasa? What is the night life like in Labasa? Is there a theatre? Is there a cinema?

In Fiji, we tend to have this idea of these specialist doctors will just come and work anywhere but these are highly trained international professionals, so it is very difficult for example to get a foreign, very good specialist doctor to go to a place like Labasa. So these are the challenges, there is also a shortage of people. We now have, Madam Chairperson, some exchanges now with the University of Griffith from Queensland, a couple of them have come and done internships for 6 months at Nadi Hospital and we are looking at different alternatives now in terms of recruiting doctors.

So we have actually reduced it by approximately \$16 million because of the fact that we will not be able to fill in these positions. In this financial year, the reason why, Madam Chairperson, as you know that we had brought this in because there was a lot complaints by doctors in the manner in which the Ministry of Health over a number of years had actually been managing that.

Of course, as the Honourable Radrodro does say, but she is a bit premature now to say, why we just move it Ministry of Health. Some of the matters are being resolved and once they are, then obviously it will go back to the Ministry of Health. This is what we call a stopgap measure, whilst various reforms are also being carried out within the Ministry itself, the Ministry of Health is also going through a structural reform to modernise the service structure within the hospital system.

The Civil Service Reform, Madam Chairperson, is that, as the Honourable Radrodro should know this because she only talks about Civil Service and I have given about three or four as specific Ministerial Statements on this. The Civil Service Reform Management Unit sits in the Ministry of Economy. It has got a Director and it has got a specific team. The Ministry of Civil Service, yes, it does carry out once

these reforms have gone through, they are responsible for training and in fact, the salaries and the number of staff have increase for the Ministry of Civil Service minus the doctors and their salaries have gone up from \$885,000 to \$1.025 million.

That is what it is, and in fact, Madam Chairperson, as far as SEG 5 is concerned, she raised that, she has assumed that training has gone down. In fact, Madam Chairperson, if you look at SEG 5, there is an increment of \$2.0 million to \$2.2 million. There has been a decrease in the following allocations: Service Level Agreement of \$30,000, Online Education has come down trailing by \$50,000 and In-Service Training by \$18,000.

However, Madam Chairperson, there has been an increase in the following allocations: Doctors - Training (\$439,800); Leadership Training (\$48,000); and of course, the Productivity Levy that will be put in place. This is on top of the various announcements being made by Government in respect of providing in-house qualification opportunities for Civil Service, both to do Post Graduate studies, Masters and even PhD, thank you.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Any other comments on this Head?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, my question was just that it looks like that that Doctors' Personal Emoluments, Allowances, Gratuities and the Doctors' Training which totalled to \$49.2 million. My question was just that because it is about doctors, you do not have to create a Ministry to sort of look after this. It could have a separate Unit in the Ministry of Health. It is just that this is the Ministry of Civil Service, which was established to spearhead the Civil Service Reform and then you have these Doctors' Personal Emoluments and their Trainings sitting there. It has got a \$52 million Budget and then out of that, \$49.2 million belongs to the doctors, so my question was: Is this Ministry of Civil Service just established to do this work because this work could very well be contained in a Unit in the Ministry of Health? Why is this Ministry called the "Ministry of Civil Service" when more than three-quarter of the Budget belongs to these doctors?

If it is for these doctors, there could be a separate unit in the Ministry of Health, why create a Ministry of Civil Service?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, I really do not know, what else do I have to say to get through to the Honourable Member? I really do not know. I have just answered all her questions. This Ministry of Civil Service was established to carry out training to actually carry on with the Civil Service Reform Management. That is already with the Ministry of Economy, that is carrying out all of the instructions. Once the different Ministries get Phase 2 there, the Ministry of Civil Service looks after that, and Madam Chairperson, as I also highlighted to her and to the Parliament that the Ministry of Health's doctors' salaries was moved across because there were certain issues with the Ministry of Health, the manner in which they were managing it and the doctors had raised a lot of complaints because the internal structures of the Ministry of Health was very archaic.

We could not afford to let a very key human resource component of service delivery of the health service in Fiji to be treated that way, so whilst the reforms are being carried out, here we have an independent body because there are all sorts of issues were being raised by the doctors and the doctors are actually happy, and as we have also said, Madam Chairperson, that this will go back to the Ministry of Health in time to come.

This Ministry of Civil Service was not created for doctors, it is a preposterous suggestion, this is the second or third time I am actually saying this, so the problem with Honourable Radrodro is that, he grabs on to an idea, irrespective of the facts, he continues with it.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Chairperson, can I have clarifications on that, when you talked about doctors, does that mean local and overseas doctors together, that are now being paid from the Ministry of Civil Service?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We do not discriminate between foreigners and locals. They are doctors working for the Public Health System.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- And the various groups of doctors, what about the dentists, are they also included in here?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, medical doctors only, Ministry of Health, and the nurses too in the Ministry of Health.

HON. MEMBER.- And the dentists?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The dentists in the Ministry of Health.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Is this not similar to this like CPD professional developments, et cetera?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Well, the Ministry of Health has their only internal training programmes, et cetera.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, there being no other comments.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Madam Chairperson, the training for doctors, as you know, we had a policy change. We now pay fully for Postgraduate Studies for doctors who work for the Public Health System. If they want to go and do a Postgraduate Study at FNU, we pay for that fully despite of what we call in training.

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- Thank you, Parliament will now vote on Head No. 17.

Question put.

The Question is:

That the amount of Head No. 17 - Ministry of Civil Service, be approved.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

MADAM CHAIRPERSON.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to.

Head No. 17 – Ministry of Civil Service agreed to.

We have now concluded voting on Heads 1 to 17 as set out in the timetable, agreed to by the Whips, we will now adjourn the Committee of Supply until tomorrow.

Honourable Members, I will resume the Speaker's Chair in order to adjourn the House.

The House resumed:

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members, the Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.21 p.m.