

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**



## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

### **DAILY HANSARD**

**FRIDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY, 2019**

**[CORRECTED COPY]**

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## **FRIDAY, 15TH FEBRUARY, 2019**

The Parliament met at 9.31 a.m., pursuant to notice.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

### **PRESENT**

All Honourable Members were present.

### **MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 14th February, 2019, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on the motion.

The Question is:

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 14th February, 2019 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, as no Member opposes, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

#### Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I welcome all Honourable Members to this final day sitting for February. I also welcome members of the public joining us in the public gallery and those watching proceedings on television and the internet, as well as those listening to the radio.

#### Written Response – Question No. 09/2019

At this juncture, I wish to inform Honourable Members that the Secretariat has received a written response from the Honourable Prime Minister to Written Question No. 09/2019 asked by the Honourable Viliame Gavoka. This has been conveyed accordingly and a copy will also be made available on the Parliament website.

Thank you Honourable Members and we will now proceed to the next item on the Order Paper.

## PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to table his report.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present to Parliament the Mid-Year Fiscal Statement from 1st August, 2018 to 31st January, 2019. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Mid-Year Fiscal Statement from 1st August, 2018 to 31st January, 2019 to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs to table his Report.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present to Parliament the Ministry of Defence, National Security and Immigration Bi-Annual Report of January to July 2016.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Ministry of Defence, National Security and Immigration Bi-Annual Report of January to July 2016 to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

Thank you, Honourable Members. We will now proceed to the next item on the Order Paper.

## QUESTIONS

### Oral Questions

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Honourable Anare Jale to ask Question No. 39/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

EFL Power Grid  
(Question No. 39/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services advise Parliament on when local farmers who do not have access to electricity will be connected to the EFL power grid?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Manager and Meteorological Services).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

In Fiji, according to the Ministry of Agriculture farmer listing, we have a total of slightly more than 69,000 farmers all around the country - Central, Western, Northern Divisions and so forth. Most of these farmers have been assisted by the Ministry through the rural electrification programme but when we assist the farmers, we also assist those that live around the farmers.

Just to put some context into this, over the past five years, from 2014 to the 2017/2018 budget, we have invested around \$163 million in rural electrification and that is an increase of two and a half times from what we were spending back in 2014. So there has been an expansion of what we are doing in this area.

Out of that money, \$92.8 million out of that \$163 million has been paid to EFL for extending the grid extension for 367 schemes for a total of 12,417 houses. Some of the farming communities that have been assisted have included:

- Seaqqa farming communities in Macuata - around 200 people;
- Malawai and Muanidevo Settlements in Dreketi – around 500 people;
- Keiyasi to Vatubalavu and nearby communities in Navosa - over 2,100 people;
- Namau and Navala Villages in Ba (which the Honourable Prime Minister opened a few weeks ago) - 1,600 people; and
- Malabi to Waimicia Project in Wainibuka - around 3,500 people.

In addition to this, the following projects are currently in progress:

- Waibau Settlement in Naitasiri – around 376 people;
- Lomaivuna Settlement and nearby communities - 1,148 people;
- Qiolvevu Road in Naitasiri - 345 people;
- Tokaimalo District in Ra - 655 people;
- Vunivere, Vuimanuca community in Seaqqa - 1,000 people;
- Lagalaga Settlement in Labasa - 1,320 people;
- Solove in Seaqqa - 500 people.

Some of the 2018/2019 projects that have already been paid to EFL to start with the design and construction later on include the:

- Nalawa District in Nasau, Rakiraki - 3,000 people;
- Lalakoro, Vunimako, Rokosalase and Dagau in Seaqqa - 715 people;
- Weilagi to Naselesele Village in Taveuni - 1,475 people; and
- Naikelikoso and Wainikoro in Labasa - 510 people.

In this year's budget, the details of which you will be able to find this in the supplement that has been given in the budget. Government has allocated an additional \$47 million for the construction of 176 schemes. You can find a full list in this budget supplement.

So, in the next three years, the Government has set a target to connect an additional 2,500 houses, roughly around 12,500 people to the grid annually. Most of these are in rural areas and this is part of our striving to achieve our target of achieving 100 percent access to electricity by the year 2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. I give the floor to the Honourable Anare Jale.

HON. A. JALE.- A supplementary question, Sir. I would like to ask the Minister to clarify when the farmers in Waibau in Sawani will be connected to the EFL grid?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the Honourable Member for his question. For the Waibau settlement where there are 69 houses, the project cost will cost \$360,000 for a population of 376. House wiring has been completed for all the houses. The grid extension project is in progress and is expected to be completed by April of this year or before April this year. In relation to some of the other projects that we have in Naitasiri, for Navutu, Lomaivuna and nearby settlements, there are about 108 houses, the total project for that area is about \$1.6 million covering more than 1,100 people. Once again, the grid extensions, the poles are there, it is just that the house wiring and connection is in progress and we also want to complete that by the first half of this year.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. The Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, you have the floor.

HON. RO T.V. KEPa.- Honourable Speaker, a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister: What about farmers on islands like Beqa, Honourable Minister, who are planting *yaqona* and offseason tomatoes and other crops, how can they be connected to the EFL project?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think for the island of Beqa, grid extension might be a difficulty. We do have some grid extensions for some islands that are closer to Viti Levu, but for those whose distances are quite longer, they can have access to the solar systems. If you have a look at this document that you have here, you will find that there is also a program here for Solar Home Systems. I have been to the Village of Rukua where they have that Solar Fund-type system. We have set up some there with the Japanese.

We have had some systems set up in the island of Namara, with the Korean, where there is a diesel and solar hybrid-type system. So those types of systems are the ones that we want to put out into the islands, so there will be more emphasis on renewable energy and sometimes it is a hybrid between renewable and fossil phase-based systems and this is what we will push out to all the islands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. The Honourable Mosese Bulitavu, you have the floor.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. My question to the Honourable Minister, from the budget kit that he has showed us on the list of grid extension: For the Northern division, the Villages of Nubunikavula and Draunivau are still waiting, Sir. Already, this has been announced in the budget, so I would just want to ask the Honourable Minister, from the grid extension being announced in the Budget in the 2018-2019, when will that project start? He has already stated that it will start in April but when can we see the completion of that and also, Sir, in the areas in Solove in Seaqaqa, where he has mentioned, the grid has come there but the problem there by the Department of Energy is the wiring, and they are still waiting for those too, Sir. If the Minister can announce and give assurance to the people on what can be done in those cases?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the settlement is listed in the list, it would will be addressed in the current financial year. For others that are not in this list, we will look to include them as we progress, always with the intent of achieving our targets for 100 percent access for electricity by the timelines that we have.

There are, of course, challenges in terms of implementation of the projects, adverse weather conditions. When the weather is bad, it is going to be difficult to be able to move things to where they need to have. One other major challenge that we have is the limited number of contractors that meet the requirements of EFL. We do not want any Tom, Dick and Harry just to come in and do the wiring, otherwise all of a sudden something blows up. Also sometimes there are challenges in terms of acquisition of land, sometimes the roads get washed away or other things get washed away and the timely delivery of material but the focus is, if it is in this list that we have here, the ones that we target this year with the EFL we will work to make sure that that happens as much as possible.

For those settlements that are not in this list, and I encourage all members to keep this list handy so that you know what we are targeting this year, if you are not on this list, we will progressively include them so that we can achieve our overall target for the next two years of 100 percent access to electrification.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. I now give the floor to the Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau, you have the floor.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Will you be offering EFL shares to landowners? Thank you.

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

HON. J. USAMATE.- I think, Honourable Speaker, the idea of a supplementary question means that it has to be related to the primary question. A supplementary question has to be related...

HON. MEMBER.- Share in EFL?

Shares in EFL are not what we are talking about here. We are talking about access of electricity through grid extension to farmers in rural areas. So I think the meaning of this word “supplementary” needs to be understood by all the Members of this House.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. That is quite clear.

I give the floor to the Honourable Saukuru, you have the floor.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Thank you, Sir. Honourable Speaker, I thank the Minister for his response. I just ask the Minister to update the House on the new Tukuraki Village electrification.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I do not have the specific answer to that request but I will have to find out. I ask the Honourable Member to may be send me an e-mail or a text to remind me then I will get the information across to him.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Pio Tikoduadua, you have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Honourable Speaker, thank you. Honourable Speaker, I may have missed this when the Honourable Minister was announcing the name of the communities that he is targetting for this year. I just have a point for clarification regarding communities of Dugunavatu and Nalidi, both in Ra. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- As I was mentioning before, we have a list of the communities that we are targeting this year and if a community was not part of that list and if their community has not been addressed before, it needs to be taken into account in the communities that we will address in the coming years, whether it is the 2019-2020 Budget or the one after that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you have the floor.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Sir, this is a supplementary question: Would the Honourable Minister tell us about the facilities for duty free and the other excess finances that used to be given concession for the private consumers who want to bring in and install their own with the licensing authorities for solar powered facilities in their homes. *Vinaka saka.*

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir. I think that question is asking something that may be outside the purview of the discussion but I do know that solar panels are duty free because there is a general focus by Government to encourage people to move to renewable energy and as much as possible we want to assist people. So solar panels and things like that which are duty free we encourage people to move towards renewable energy.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. We will move on to the second oral question for today and I give the floor to the Honourable Sanjay Kirpal.

Indian High Commission - Thurston Gardens  
(Question No. 40/2019)

HON. S.S. KIRPAL asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources explain to Parliament how the land at Thurston Gardens was allocated to the Indian High Commission and whether any consultation was done?

HON. A. SUDHAKAR (Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I thank the Honourable Sanjay Kirpal for his question.

Honourable Speaker, firstly, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as the Speaker of this august House and I also wish you well in your term as the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to address the question by the Honourable Member properly let me go a bit into the history of the Botanical Gardens. The Botanical Gardens was established in 1881 along the Waimanu Road by Sir John Bates Thurston, and it was later moved to its current site in 1913 and eventually renamed as Thurston Gardens in 1976.



Over the years, this land has been subdivided into various lots:

1. Government House;
2. Botanical Gardens;
3. Public Service Commission Building;
4. Fiji Museum; and the most recent being the
5. British High Commissioner's Residence - 1989.

Honourable Speaker, the Suva City Council was approached by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources in 2014 on the possibility of the Council surrendering about 6,467 square metres of land near the Suva Museum and this is a portion of the total area of 53,494 square meters to allow a Chancery to be built by the Indian Government.

The area that is being allocated to the Indian Embassy covers 6,467 square metres and that portion of the land is covered by trees and shrubs beside and below the British High Commissioner's residence; it is an unused part of the garden. The area designated is currently part of the car park. The rest of it is to be retained, the purpose being for public access to still be available to the car park.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had agreed with the Government of India for the Fijian Government to allocate the subject site for the above construction and the Government of India to allocate a land parcel to the Fijian Government in New Delhi to construct a facility for Fiji's Embassy in India.

At the time of the allocation in 2014, that portion of land in New Delhi was valued at \$US55 million and currently it is somewhere around F\$107 to F\$110 million. The land is situated in Chanakyapuri in New Delhi, the most prime area of New Delhi where other diplomatic missions are located. Fiji was fortunate to get this piece of land as no other country was able to secure a block of land within this prime area.

Honourable Speaker, at the Parliamentary session in December, 2014, a question was raised to the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, and the question was "... if there are moves in progress under sections of Thurston Gardens for the purpose of building the proposed Indian High Commission?" The then Minister, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, responded and then as Madam Speaker allowed, "... I thank the Honourable Member for the question. I think the question is not totally correct, it is not sections of Thurston Gardens. If you go to the Museum, it is the land on the left and Thurston Gardens is on the right".

Honourable Speaker, the Government identified the subject land to be the most appropriate and suitable for the Indian High Commission which will house the Embassy, Cultural Centre and the Chancery. Consequently, on the 19th of November, 2014 a diplomatic agreement through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Indian Government and the Fijian Government to further consolidate and develop traditional friendship and multi-faceted cooperation between the two countries.

Honourable Speaker, this is part of the reciprocal arrangements that Governments enter when they talk about building chanceries or embassies and we have precedents in this regard. The first being where the US Embassy was supposed to be moved from the city area to another part of Suva, it is now currently moved to Tamavua, there was a Crown grant where a piece of State land in the most prime location of the municipality, at the highest peak of the municipality was converted from Crown lease; a Crown piece of land to freehold and then subsequently transferred to the US Embassy, the Government of United States. At that time the Minister for Lands was Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu

and his signature exists on the Crown grant. That was a very valuable piece of land, Honourable Speaker, and in fact, there was no exchange with the US Government. It was just a one way grant.

There is another precedent, Honourable Speaker, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) where the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea (PNG) were given portions of land on the prime Suva foreshore and the respective land for Solomon Islands was allocated 5,402 square metres; the Vanuatu Embassy was allocated 5,898 square metres; and the Papua New Guinea Embassy was allocated 6,144 square metres at a rental of \$100 per annum. This is to build their Embassies.

Fiji has also benefitted from such bilateral exchanges through the support of countries like Australia. It should be noted that Canberra gave us a piece of land in Canberra to build our Embassy free of charge at that time and the Papua New Guinea Government will confirm that a piece of land for Fiji is to be given to build our Chancery in PNG. This arrangement with PNG will be important to Fiji given the high cost of real estate in PNG and currently the rent that we will be paying in PNG will be the highest amongst all other Embassies. That actually shows the value of the land that we are given in PNG to build our Chancery.

Mr. Speaker Sir, such reciprocal arrangement greatly benefit countries like Fiji which is still a developing country and affordability of land can become a challenge. When we are to acquire land in foreign countries, they are valued at a very high rate as former Minister for Lands would know. Therefore, when we give a portion of land in exchange for a higher land value, it is important that we take the deal.

After careful consideration, it was decided that the development would bring multiple benefits, including opportunity for new trade markets, promotion of the capital city and trade facilitation. Therefore, agreeing to the approval by the SCC and other Government agencies.

On the second part of the question, Honourable Speaker, as far as the consultations are concerned, following the MOU, the Ministry for Lands carried out the survey works which were approved by the Suva City Council and the provisional approval by the Director of Town and Country Planning for rezoning of the land from recreational space to special use for an embassy, which has been notified to the public and the objection period started on 25th January, 2019.

The process of objection is open for 30 days from the date of advertisement. At the close of the objection period the Director of Town and Country Planning will take a decision on confirming the final approval based on all the paperwork, including the inputs of the general members of the public and the objections received and the overall requirements set by the law.

I would reiterate, Honourable Speaker, that the land that we are talking about here is just a portion of the Thurston Gardens which is not actually being used and it has been lying idle as a car parking space for years, and it is just a 6,467 square metres out of the whole portion of 53,494 square metres. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Speaker, given that there is a continuing connection to this land by the people of Suvavou, not just cultural and the Honourable Minister will confirm that they are paying an annuity annually. And given that this piece of land is truly iconic, it is historical and given that this piece of land will totally interfere with the Museum and its look...

HON. SPEAKER.- Your supplementary question, Honourable Member.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- ...can he seriously consider moving the Embassy elsewhere because of those very good reasons? Please, can you do it?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir. The Honourable Member's question as previously alluded to by the former Minister for Lands, is not totally correct. It is not correct at all, in fact. If one enters the driveway to the Museum, this portion of the land is on the left side, it is not part of the actual Botanical Gardens.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- You listen to me. It is lying there idle.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- It was unused.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order! Do not carry on a conversation between yourselves. Address the Chair and when you have the opportunity, Honourable Nawaikula, address the Chair as well, while you are talking to the other Honourable Member.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will just restart.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will go on. You have the floor.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, so I will just restart from where I left.

The point to note here is that, the land in question is not part of the actual Botanical Gardens. It is the portion of the land before one enters...

(Honourable Members interject)

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

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- If one enters the driveway, it is a piece of land that is the left side of the driveway. In fact, it has not been used for the past hundred years and I do not know what the Honourable Member was doing at that time. You should have raised the objection.

But considering the value of that land, it is currently valued at F\$1.2 million. Compare that with the piece of land that we are getting in a prime portion of New Delhi, the capital of India which is currently valued about \$110 million.

In answering his question, Honourable Speaker, the actual process of public consultations is going on, so he can raise his objection with the Director of Town and Country Planning. But at the

moment, that piece of land has got nothing to do with the actual Botanical Gardens. It is an idle piece of land.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau you have the floor.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. Government Buildings, where this honourable House is built, is on the land that originally belonged to the *Kai Suva*. The name Suva was coined by the native owners of the Suva Peninsular on the suvasuvsa where they built the Botanical Gardens where it is today.

The Tui Suva moved to Naiqasiqasi where His Excellency the President now lives and a village and temple was built where the Botanical Gardens is today, including the land that the Honourable Minister mentioned.

On being asked to move to Kiuva, the Tui Suva refused and asked to move his people to Samabula.

HON. SPEAKER.- What is your supplementary question?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- The Crown relied on plans drawn by the company to call for 300 acres of land where Botanical Gardens is.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- What is your supplementary question?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Botanical Gardens is not just a piece of land. It is a cultural, historical (I still have time) and heritage site it must be declared a heritage site.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

Honourable Member, it is not for you to make a statement when you are asking a supplementary question. It is a simple process. This has been going on for a while. If you ask a supplementary question to the Minister, you will get an answer. But do not make a statement. That is part of the process.

You have the floor Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. So, based on the question whether consultations had been done, no consultations have been done with our original landowner, Tui Suva. What are you doing about that?

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- You are not the Speaker!

HON. SPEAKER.- On a Point of Order, yes.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Point of Order is that there has been a deliberate attempt not to heed your advice, Mr. Speaker, Sir. You have asked the Honourable Member to ask the question, he has continued to read his statement out.

I think what you have talked about is that supplementary questions are for questions, they are not for lengthy explanations. They are for questions. I think in this case the Honourable Member has not taken heed of the decision that you have made.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, I have made the explanation very clear and the Honourable Member has eventually asked the question to the Minister. Now, you have the floor, Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I really could not understand what he was asking so if he can repeat his question.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is; what consultations have you done with the Tui Suva and his people who are the original landowners of where you are sitting and the Botanical Gardens, until today?

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- No pointing!

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- You always point every time. You point all the time.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, you have asked the question. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member would know that the land is State land at the moment. The issue of original landowners was subject to a court case, a Suva High Court matter of 2010 and that has been dealt with.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- You listen to me!

At the moment, the land title is a State land, that is the first issue.

The second issue is that, when a portion of this land was previously allocated to the British High Commission for a residential purpose in 1989, there was no such consultation, there was no such objection from the other side.

The issue here is that, this land currently sits on State title and the State is doing what is within its powers? The rest of it, the consultations will be done by the Director of Town and Country Planning as part of the Local Government Act. The process is there.

Now, if it is State land, there is no need for consultation at this point in time and I would like to reiterate that previously when a portion of the land was allotted for residential purposes, there was no such objections. This is for a public purpose, this is for a chancery. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I rise on a Point of Order and that is Standing Order 81 on misrepresentation.

HON. SPEAKER.- You have the floor.

HON RATU N.T LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker Sir, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your being elected to your High Office, and I wish you well.

On the issue of misinterpretation, Sir, the Honourable Minister for Lands pulled quite a fast one there by glossing over the transaction at the present US Embassy site is something that is quite similar to this broken record that is usually played from the other side about land sales in Momi, the swap, et cetera.

But, Sir, the issue of correction here is that, that piece of land used to be leased by Telecom and Telecom sold their interests to the American Embassy. It was only through the request of the American Embassy to the Government, Sir, because they wanted a more secure land tenure there that the Director of Lands, who had the powers then, exercised that authority and completed the endorsement for the Government of the day. So that is the correction that needs to be fully spelt out by the Honourable Minister for Lands, Sir. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you Honourable Member. Honourable Mitieli Bulanauca?

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, can I have the Honourable Minister explain about the history of the land and the exchange over Embassy sites in Delhi and Fiji and the Papua New Guinea site, et cetera? But he has not answered the question. How was that Crown land allocated? What was the process followed, how much had they paid for it, et cetera?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, that explanation has been going on for the last 15 minutes. We have gone through that whole processes, now you want us to go through it again. It has been fully explained.

Honourable Member, the explanation may not fulfil every one's wishes. It has not been done so in the past and it has not done so in the present, but it has been explained fully by the Honourable Minister.

I think we will move on to the next question and it should be asked by the Honourable Mikaele Leawere. You have the floor, Sir.

Poor Drainage – Queen's Highway  
(Question No. 41/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and the Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment inform Parliament whether there are plans in place to rectify the poor drainage along the Queen's Highway and other parts of Fiji which leads to continuous flooding?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and the Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment).- Honourable Speaker, reading the question, it is slightly confusing whereby the Honourable Member is saying, poor drainage along the Queen's Highway. I hope he is not referring to roadside drain because that is part of the road design and that is under FRA, so I hope you are not referring to that. Honourable Speaker, I believe he is referring to the Central Division drainage but along the Queen's Highway towards Sigatoka.

Honourable Speaker, in the last Budget, Government demonstrated its commitment to dealing with the issue of flooding throughout Fiji. And for the first time ever, Government made substantial allocation to undertake drainage work, dredging work, river bank protection and sea wall protection, to protect our communities.

Honourable Speaker, you may recall, the underlying theme of the last Budget was to support and protect communities. If Honourable Member had seriously perused through the 2018 and 2019 Budget Estimates, he would have noted that there was a separate allocation, first time ever, for drainage for rural residential areas of \$3 million. So this means, never before were we undertaking drainage work for villages or settlements.

We had Drainage Schemes, designated area by law, there was an allocation for that, plus we had Irrigation Schemes and Floodgates. So other than that, we did not have any specific allocation for rural residential villages or settlements. For the first time ever, we have got a \$3 million allocation for that. Then we also have a separate allocation of \$2.7 million for non-municipal councils. For the second time in the Budget, our Government allocated financial resources for municipal councils. Municipal councils were struggling to undertake drainage work in their area. For the second time, in the previous Budget and this Budget, the Minister for Economy decided that we will support the municipal councils given the problems they were encountering resulting from flooding in the commercial CBD area, we had a separate allocation.

In addition to that, Sir, another \$2.7 million to deal with drainage outside the municipal councils which does not fall under rural residential. Then we have got, for the first time ever, outside sugar belt, before that allocation was for the sugar cane area under FSC. We also have additional allocations for non-sugar farms. Honourable Speaker having said that, these allocations are for de-silting of existing drains, so you got existing drains which has been silted. So, this allocation is utilised to de-silt those drains.

Two, there are a lot of places now which needs new drains, excavation of drains.

Three, there are creeks. Often, Honourable Speaker, when we talk about flooding, we talk about the bigger rives: Navua, Rewa, Rakiraki, Nasiriti, Sigatoka, but we forget about a number of other tributaries and because of activities happening upstream in the catchments which did not use to happen some four decades ago, logging and agricultural activities, there are a lot of top soil, silt material getting washed away and coming to the waterway, coming down stream. So these creeks are also silted, we need to de-silt these creeks and there is an allocation for doing that as well.

Then we also have riverbank and sea wall protection, so we have got an allocation for that. So, Honourable Speaker, a substantial amount of work has been undertaken to deal with, specifically to the question asked by Honourable Leawere to deal with the rural residential and settlement drainage along the Queen's Highway. Last year we spent about \$2.8 million just for works from Suva, along the Queen's Highway right up to Nadi separating out the dredging work. That, itself, for example, the Sigatoka River dredging work is of the total value of \$3.3 million. Separating that out just for rural residential and settlements we had spent last year an amount of \$2.8 million.

Honourable Speaker, in the Western Division we did drainage work worth \$1.1 million, Northern Division - \$0.5 million and Central Division - \$1.1 million.

Honourable Speaker, in the Central Division, areas of interest to Honourable Leawere who is from Navua Village unfortunately, Honourable Members from the other side continuously talk about my area, their area and he has been bugging me a lot about drainage work in Navua only.

He never talks about, whenever he meets me, Honourable Speaker, he never asks me about how we are solving problems flooding problems in Rakiraki. Honourable Speaker, have you heard about the major rainfall we had, did anyone get affected in Rakiraki? No. He is not bothered about any other community except Galoa.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Settlement, drainage work along Queen's Highway in Navua. Galoa village - \$8,000. Culanuku Village - \$12,879.74, Naboutini Village - \$20,475.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Your colleague asked.

Waikalou Floodgate Upgrading Work - \$46,000; Vakabalea, Navua Drainage Work - \$8,400; Veiwawa Drainage Work - \$13,400; Tokotoko, Navua Drainage Work - \$6,600; Nasasa Drainage Improvement - \$29,000; Waidradra - \$12,000. This is only for last year, Honourable Speaker. Nakaulevu, Navua Drainage Work, \$5,700; Veiwawa, Navua Drainage Work - \$12,000; Waiqanitu, Navua Drainage Work - \$14,000, Rovadrau Drainage Work - \$11,400, Nakaulevu Creek De-silting Work - \$8,000, Waikalou Drainage Work - \$38,000, Korovisilou Drainage Work - \$53,000. So this is in Navua, Honourable Speaker. I have got a list for the entire Sigatoka, Nadi, that is also Queen's Highway, I can read that out, Honourable Speaker, it is on the Members to ask me. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. I give the floor to the Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Speaker, that is a lot of money for nothing. The Honourable Minister will agree that the biggest problem in Navua ...

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- You are the biggest problem.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- ... is the problem of the Rice Scheme Irrigation especially the floodgates. The floodgates have not been working for so many years. During floods, they do not close. Can the Honourable Minister inform the House when the rice irrigation drainage especially the floodgates will be fixed?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Honourable Speaker, that is totally incorrect Unfortunately, he was not concentrating. I just said that we spent close to a million dollars on the upgrading of the Irrigation Scheme (IS) for the Navua Irrigation Scheme. Of course, there are floodgates. Honourable Speaker, only on Waikalou we spent \$26,000 but I will tell you, what happens, Honourable Speaker. In reality, there are people ....



(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- You need to listen.

There are people who play around with floodgates because they would want to do swimming upstream, they would want to do fishing upstream so they will deliberately use a piece of timber, et cetera to keep the floodgate open. In that way, there are times when floodgates get damaged. Secondly, also, Honourable Speaker, debris coming from upstream, et cetera, damages the floodgate. We do not have a person stationed 24/7 at the floodgates to tell us ...

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Please listen.

... that this floodgate today is damaged. Whenever the issue is raised with us, immediately we have got a person stationed fulltime in Navua to go and get a contractor to repair that. So if you ask me now, Honourable Speaker, I will say, "No floodgate is having any problem." But you have to tell me, tell us, come and tell us. Honourable Speaker, he is not able to tell me if there is a particular floodgate which is broken.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Okay, we will find out, but make sure you are not lying to this House.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Don't tell me you did it yourself.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Pio Tikoduadua, you have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I thank the Minister for the answers that he gave to the Honourable Leawere's question. I would like to bring the Minister closer to Suva and I am glad the Honourable Minister is sitting next to the Minister for Local Government. I would like to ask the Minister if he could come to this new development site at Davuilevu Housing. Now there are so many tributaries that lead to this creek where there are about 10 houses located before it gets to the road. These houses flood every day and it is doing exactly what you are saying. The silt that is coming out ....

HON. SPEAKER.- Question, Honourable Member?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- The question is, would you like to come and have a look because the houses are being flooded every time it rains? At least both could come.

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- That was an easy one, Honourable Speaker. Absolutely, yes, I would ask the Honourable Minister to give me the details. I will try to come with the engineers, if not, my engineers will go down and have a look.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, time is moving on. We have a short day today. We still have several questions to be asked, and there are statements to be made at the end of the day.

But I intend to take morning tea break, some of you might not be expecting that from the last Parliament, I am uncomfortable not having morning tea for some reason.

(Laughter)

So, we will take morning tea. We will then take the questions, but we will limit the number of supplementary questions, and if we do not cover all the questions, we will carry several of the questions over to the next sitting of Parliament.

If no one objects, then we will take an adjournment now for morning tea and we will resume at 11.00 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.27 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.00 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will continue with the questions, and we will move onto Question No. 4 in today's Order Paper, and I have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Honourable Rohit Sharma to ask Question No. 42/2019. You have the floor.

Ice Plants and Solar Freezers  
(Question No. 42/2019)

HON. R.R. SHARMA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries clarify as to why ice plants and solar freezers are both provided to coastal and maritime communities?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU (Minister for Fisheries).- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I would like to just answer the supplementary question that was raised by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition yesterday which you had indicated that I can answer that at a later sitting.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, just attend to the one that was asked at the moment. Thank you, Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Honourable Speaker, Sir. I rise to respond to the clarification being sought by the Honourable Member, and I would like to thank him for the question.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, today our Ministry operates 26 Ice Plants which service our coastal and maritime communities. Honourable Speaker, Sir, from Rotuma in the North, to Lakeba in the East, our fellow Fijians now benefit from this development assistance.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, we continue our work in this regard and just last week, the Ministry commissioned another two Fisheries Stations which also include two Ice Plants in the island of Moala and Cicia. Ice plants are installed in the maritime islands where there is sufficient water and allocated as much reasonably to provide an ease of access to fishermen. This development is designed to maximise the revenue by fishermen and minimising the cost of travel to access ice.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, in order to fulfil the needs of communities without water source and sufficiently enough to sustain an Ice Plant, the Ministry has provided Solar Powered Freezers. To-date a total of three Solar Powered Freezers have been distributed in three islands:

- Two in the Eastern Division; and
- One in the Central Division.

The original unit was tried out in the Central Division as it was closer to the support of Fisheries to be able to assist in the support of the upkeep of this new solar system.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, these initiatives are only possible through our active partnerships with the Fishermen Associations. The Government structure that support Fishermen Associations provides the foundation for our efforts to effectively raise the development of fisheries through the operational business model. For example, Fishermen's Associations are the platform to build capacity, maintain sustainability, improve infrastructure and provide a path to the market. This directly enhances the standard of living of our fellow Fijians in our coastal and maritime communities. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister, you have the floor, Honourable Member.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir. I wish to ask the Honourable Minister, what is the investment required to introduce these new solar freezers and how does the Ministry plan to provide them?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, and I thank the Honourable Member for the supplementary question. The Ministry of Fisheries plans to commission 40 solar freezers within the next twelve months. In the month of January, as I have already alluded to, we installed three units and we are currently in the process of commissioning three more units in February.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, an investment of \$17,000 per unit which was won by the company during a tender and in total the installation, it will be \$20,000 on each unit in total. The Ministry is extremely grateful for the support received from Government to-date and we have also secured and continued to seek donor funding to facilitate the implementation of this programme.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Salote Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Minister for his enlightenment on the very pertinent issues to those of us that appreciate the maritime. My question is regarding the 26 ice plants that were established by former Governments, Alliance, Soqosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) and Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) and they are quite aged, Honourable Speaker.

Can the Honourable Minister tell us when they will replace some of those 26 ice plants because they frequently break down and that totally renders those ice plants quite useless, particularly those in the islands, and they can start off from their economic activities for quite sometimes?

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, and I thank the Honourable Member for the supplementary question. Our aging ice plant fleet provide us with the perfect opportunity to critically revise our approach. Our strategic goal with our ice plants asset is to maximise productivity and minimise operational cost.

To this end, our ice plan replacement programme focuses on commonality brand within our ice plant fleets. This provides us with the strategic advantage of economies of scale. The efficiency will be derived through the cost and availability of spare parts and our service teams having brands specific technical capability.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, as part of our efficiency drive, we are in the process of outsourcing the service of ice plants, both in Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. This will allow the Ministry to focus on servicing the ice plant facilities in Lomaiviti, Lau and Rotuma.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I close by noting that our ice plant machinery replacement programme is aligned to our commitment to the Montreal Protocol for the complete phase-out of Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) with Hydro Chlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) 22.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Member, you have the floor.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question: what other assistance or support is made available by the Ministry to the Fishermen's Associations?

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, and I thank the Honourable Member for the supplementary question. The Ministry's partnership with the Fishermen's Association involves the provision of training, equipment and market access. The Ministry also connects the Fishermen's Association to other line agencies involved in the development initiatives such as the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, we will move on to the next question.

The fifth question for today to be asked by the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua, Question No. 43/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

Administration & Development of Sports Medicine  
(Question No. 43/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports inform Parliament whether Government, in partnership with the National Sporting Federations, has a Code of Conduct or legislation in place pertaining to the administration and development of sports medicine?

HON. P.K. BALA (Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations and Youth and Sports).- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I also thank the Honourable Member.

Honourable Speaker, each Federation is independent and some of these Federations have already developed their own code of conduct, including the value statements. Honourable Speaker, it is also important to note that most of our sporting Federations are affiliated to the International Sporting Organisations and they are aligned with the operations in regards to the rules and regulations from the international bodies.

Honourable Speaker, if one tends to read the National Development Plan at Item 3.1.8, FijiFirst Government has already suggested that we need to have a National Sports Academy. Honourable Speaker, the National Sports Academy will be established to support the development of future sports. Sports development will include talent identification, specialised training exposure, the specialised coaching and training methods, and the management of sports injury.

Honourable Speaker, as of now, there is no code of conduct or legislation from the Government to this affiliates but this is what we have been talking about whole of this week in sports: anti-doping, drugs, legislation, policies. Exactly, I have been saying to this honourable House for

the past three, four days, I can assure this Honourable House that we are working towards that legislation, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. The Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi, you have the floor.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, other countries have bodies to evaluate the ingredients in sports drinks and supplements. How does the Ministry of Sports evaluate and monitor all the supplements, protein powders, et cetera, being shipped into Fiji to ensure our sportspeople's wellbeing if they are taking these imported supplements and protein powders? Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Minister.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker and I also thank the Honourable Member.

Honourable Speaker, FASANOC does have a medical commission which provides assistance to all the National Sports Federations here in Fiji.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Mosese Bulitavu, you have the floor.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. The Honourable Minister has a habit of saying that it is in the pipeline. I do not know how long is that pipeline and when will this legislation come in, given that these are current problems faced by our sports people and the organisation and given too that he has failed to attend other issues when he was in his former portfolio.

Now, as a Minister and we cannot trust him in terms of why he came up with the legislation. When Sir? When can we find or realise all the things that you have read from the book that you are holding there?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. If my memory serves me right, I have not said anything about issues that are in the pipeline, this week. I have not mentioned about that. I do not know where he is getting all these things from but that is nothing new with this Member. He is very good at going to villages, distributing DVDs, half-truths, but let me come to this point. I have mentioned just now of Government's five-year and 20-year National Development Plans. And this is the only Government which has thought of establishing the National Academy. This is the only Government.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

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

The Honourable Minister has misled the House by saying that this is the only Government that has produced a Development Plan. Previous Governments from as far back as Alliance Government, the SVT Government, the SDL Government, have always had Development Plans. I as a career senior civil servant, we all worked through those and he should withdraw that, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Your supplementary question.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a point of clarification because they said to raise it immediately, Honourable Radrodro is incorrect because after her Leader carried out the *coup* in 1987, we did not have any Development Plans until we did it. So, since 1987 until the Bainimarama Government and the FijiFirst Government, there had been no Development Plans. The Alliance Government had it but since then, they have not had any. Correct yourself.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. CDR S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Now, what is it? Sit down!

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Honourable Koroilavesau, we have the Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Honourable Speaker, the SDL Government, I believe, had the 2015 Development Plan.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Where is it?

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- We will show you, there is a copy in the office.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.-We can pass you a copy. It is a 2015 Development Plan.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, do you have anything further to add to this.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. When did I say that, that no other Government has done this National Development Plan? I was talking about the National Academy.

(Laughter)

You show me in your Development Plan where is that mentioned? That is what I was saying, Honourable Speaker, that it is only FijiFirst that has come up with this idea of establishing the National Academy. That is what I said. They should listen properly.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members , we will move on to the sixth Oral Question for today and I give the floor to the Honourable Dr. Salik Govind to ask Question No. 44/2019. . You have the floor, Sir.

Current Status of the BTEC Programme  
(Question No. 44/2019)

HON. DR. S.R. GOVIND asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment inform Parliament on the current status of the Ministry's BTEC Programme in minimising and managing the impact of Bovine Tuberculosis and Brucellosis?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment).- Honourable Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for asking me this question primarily for two reasons, Honourable Speaker.

Firstly, in my Ministerial Statement you may have heard, I had alluded to that we are releasing new breeds of cattle. Honourable Speaker, now releasing of new breeds of cattle which is high yielding, high carcass and high milk producing breeds, will be an exercise in futility if we do not eradicate these two diseases; Brucellosis and Tuberculosis (TB) from our farms.

Honourable Speaker, this is really high on our agenda. We need to clean up our farms where we are going to deliver these animals because, if we do not clean up, these animals will go and get infected again and we will lose these animals again, this new breed.

Secondly, Honourable Speaker, these diseases - Brucellosis and TB are zoonotic diseases meaning that it can be infected from animals to humans, so we really need to get them off our farms.

Honourable Speaker, this is not something we can do it in a month or year or 10 years. In Australia, they had it for 80 years and in the 40th year, they started investing in the plan and it took 40 years. It is the only country in the world to eradicate Brucellosis and TB from their farms and it took them 40 years with massive investment.

Honourable Speaker, we have started. It is a huge massive challenge. It was detected in most provinces in Fiji over the years. The current Brucellosis and TB Eradication Campaign (BTEC) Programme encourages farmers to co-operate with our Ministry and the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF). It not only consists of going down and testing animals and culling them but also awareness and education about the importance of availing their farms for testing and giving up of those animals.

Honourable Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture and BAF has declared an emergency for Bovine and Brucellosis in Fiji and having declared this as an emergency, it has now given us the powers to enter the farms and do the tests.

Most of the BTEC Programmes are in the early stages and that was carried out last year in the Central Division because this is where we got most of the TB detected.

In 2018 last year, we extended the testing to the Western and Northern Divisions. Last year, we tested 33,839 cattle and out of that 1,681 tested positive for TB and out of the 22,019 cattle tested for Brucellosis, 31 were positive.

Initially, we had 10 trained BTEC staff who undertook TB and Brucellosis testing of the cattle heads on a day-to-day basis under the supervision of our three Veterinarians. As I have said, now we have four Veterinarians and we are in the process of hiring one more. So when I am talking about Veterinarians, Honourable Speaker, we are talking about fully qualified Veterinarians with six-year Veterinary Science Degree.



We now have four so probably in a month's time or so we will have the fifth one. And then in addition to that, we have got 30 Para-Vets. These are not fully qualified Vets but they are Para-Vets with a Diploma in Agriculture, et cetera, but they have been given specialised training to undertake the testing work, under the supervision of qualified Vets.

Honourable Speaker, we are also working very closely with BAF who have acquired a special permit to assign our trained officers to undertake the testing of the Temporary Biosecurity Officers Certification, which gives us the legal powers to go and enter a farm and undertake the test.

Honourable Speaker, there was an issue earlier on about compensation to the farmers. Initially, under the law, the farmers were paid based on whatever the proper meat agreed price was and they had to look for their own buyer. The moment the carcass was in the market they will say the carcass is partially infected, then no owner will come forward to buy it.

So now the Ministry of Agriculture have allocated a full budget to Fiji Meat Industry Board (\$4 per kilogramme) They will take it to the Fiji Meat Industry Board (FMIB), FMIB will pay them (\$4 flat) and the Ministry will compensate for any loss of the carcass. The remaining, the Ministry will repay them if they are not able to sell it because no one wants to buy it or a part of it is totally condemned meat.

So these are the developments which has allowed us to speed up the testing of animals in the farm. We now have the right to enter a farm and test the animal. These problems were identified and dealt with. Last year there was a legislation to change the compensation of the farmers, so that has assisted us greatly.

What I am saying here, Honourable Speaker, is that, with the appointment of two vets, raising the number of vets to five, with the appointment of 10 additional BTEC Officers with the authority by BAF for our officers to have the legal status, we will now speed up the testing of animals throughout Fiji in all the three Divisions for any animals which are positive with TB and Brucellosis. We will cull them out and clean our farms and hopefully, it will be safe for us to get the new breeds into the farm. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, I do not intend to take supplementary questions on this. I had warned you earlier that I would like to go on with proceedings until 12.30 p.m.

There are statements to be made, the time is nearly 11.30 a.m. and we are going to move the questions that are still pending to the next sitting, unless there are other approaches made.

Honourable Members, before we move on to the next agenda item, which is to carry us over to 12.30 p.m., I have been approached by the Attorney-General, for him to make a statement for a point of clarification on proceedings that happened yesterday. I have considered his Memo and I have made the ruling that it is in order, so he will do that.

Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity because this is of national importance.

Yesterday, Honourable Lynda Tabuya, stated and I quote:

“...liquidity is at an all-time low, and that has been the lowest since the last eight years to 10 years...”

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have extracted the figures from the Reserve Bank of Fiji and I would like to very quickly highlight that she is simply incorrect. The liquidity figures, she can obtain this from the Reserve Bank of Fiji. Just to give you an example, Mr. Speaker, Sir, liquidity in:

- 1993 - \$13.6 million;
- 1980 - \$83.6 million;
- 2005 - \$71.5 million;
- 2003 - \$236.2 million.

In recent times, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in:

- 2011 - \$510 million;
- 2012 - \$524.2 million;
- 2013 - \$598.3 million;
- 2017 - \$606 million;
- 2018 - \$306 million; and
- as of 13th February 2019 - \$342.3 million.

In the interest of time, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not want to go through every single year since 1980 but that is just to demonstrate that she is factually incorrect. It is utterly important, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we have highlighted on a number of occasions that Members of the Parliament have a responsibility to the Fijian public, to all the Fijian investors, to the Fijian people who are actually trying to invest in Fiji, the investors who come to our shores, not to actually propagate false information about our economy. Our economy is not the subject of a political ball game.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to also highlight, yesterday when the Honourable Minister for Women was talking about the number of changes that have taken place, in particular, the unprecedented assistance that has been given to our elderly in respect of our disabled people, in respect of bus fares, how we subsidise them, we give them \$40 a month and in that context, we were saying that it has never happened before and Honourable Salote Radrodro (who unfortunately is just walking out) said that it is people’s money. I said, “What did the previous governments do about people’s money.” And then she stood up and said, (I have got the *Hansard* which is obviously the one that we received), she said that I said that previous governments did not do anything about State homes. I never mentioned “State homes”. I mentioned about bus fares. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is very important for all of us to understand.

All Members of the House must know this, that we must speak the truth. We can have opinions, we can question things but it does not mean we play around with facts and figures. So Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a number of other matters that I would like to raise but I want to thank you for this and I will quite gladly give these figures that I received from the RBF to Honourable Lynda Tabuya so she can actually correct herself and correct the rest of the Members on her side of Parliament. Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Attorney-General. There is no debate on this, on the ruling.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- A Point of Order, Honourable Speaker, Sir. In just that in allowing that response from the Honourable Attorney-General, I seek the ability to respond to what he stated

as to the allegations because it actually has to do with what is in the *Hansard* and I have it before me, Honourable Speaker, Sir, that I qualified my statement by saying that it was lowest in the last 8 to 10 years.

He has just confirmed with his figures from 2011 to 2019, it has reduced up to \$300 million and that he cannot dispute, so I am not making up figures, Honourable Speaker, Sir. It is in the *Hansard*, 8 to 10 years, I qualified it and he started off with a figure of \$600 million plus, all the way down to \$300 million. I was not incorrect, Sir, and I ask him to withdraw the statement that he has made and the allegations he has made about this side of the House bringing in facts and figures that are not correct. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, I thank you. Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not know which school she went to, but if you take out 10 years from 2018 it leads you to 2008. In 2008, the figures were \$55.1 million, 10 years. Now I also want to bring to her attention, please, do not be liberal with the truth. In the *Hansard* it says, “Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. Honourable Minister, liquidity is at an all-time low”, and after we yelled and interjected, then it says, “It has been the lowest since the last eight to 10 years.”

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Yes.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- On the count of 10 years she is absolutely incorrect. Why now are you selective over 8 years? Is it 8 years or 10 years? You said, 8 to 10 years?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the problem, they are now choosing this because they have come to this Parliament not with clean hands ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... and they are now trying to play around.

HON. SPEAKER.- There is a Point of Order.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Sir, a Point of Order. Just to clarify, on what Standing Order have you allowed the Honourable Attorney-General to make that explanation?

On what Standing Orders?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, you are asking me that question, I am going to answer your question.

Now Honourable Members, when this subject came up yesterday, you were all here and you know of what had taken place. When the Honourable Attorney-General took the floor yesterday, he wanted to address this question and you had a Point of Order. I disagreed with him and asked him to stick to what he was supposed to be addressing, which he did. But I said that we would look into this question later.

It was pointed out by Honourable Lynda Tabuya, that it was the Minister for Economy and it is there in *Hansard* and I remember that very clearly and I knew this was going to come up, but, I asked that I be informed through a memorandum on this request.

The memorandum was presented, I looked at the memorandum and I believe it was in order that this House must correct itself when it needs to correct itself. That is what this House must do and that is why I had given the Honourable Attorney-General permission to do that. If on a future occasion this side of the House wants to do the same thing, I will consider that. I cannot have all the answers and one time, much as I would like to, but that would make debate in this House rather boring. But that is the ruling that I have made and I hope that we will end it there.

I hope I have made myself clear and that those three Members who were wanting to make statements are ready to make their statements. I have an indication from one.

### **END OF WEEK STATEMENTS**

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, for the information of the Honourable Members, a Member may speak for up to 10 minutes, with a 10 minute response by the relevant Minister responsible. No seconder is required and there will be no other debate.

I think you are all familiar with this procedure, so we should not have any problems, I hope. I now call upon the Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua to deliver the first End of the Week Statement.

#### Strengthening the Powers of EIA Unit

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. I rise to give my End of Week Statement where I wish to highlight the dire need to strengthen the powers of the Environmental Impact Assessment Unit of the Department of Environment, in light of the recent incidences of grave environmental degradation in Fiji, some of which have only come to light recently.

Sir, Fiji has now ratified all of the major global human rights treaties including last year's ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. Sir, environmental protection is essential to fulfil many of the rights recognised in these agreements.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, my following comments therefore should not be taken by the Honourable Minister as an attack on his Department's competency rather because I offer feedback observations and suggestions after having consulted with stakeholders from environmental law, from civil society and from environmentally minded members of the public, I hope the Honourable Minister will take on board the points I highlight as I lobby for more resources for the EIA Unit as we are all stakeholders in this plight.

The report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Environment, Dr. David Boyd at the end of his visit to Fiji in December made a number of significant observations regarding the Environment Management Act and in particular the EIA process. For the information of the Honourable Members and the public, Sir, Dr. Boyd is an environmental lawyer and an internationally renowned expert on human rights and the environment who was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council last year. I was able to accompany Dr. Boyd and his colleague Dr. Soo-Young Hwang on several of their site visits in Suva during their stay here. In his report, Sir, Dr. Boyd said it was clear that the Ministry of Environment is seriously under resourced. For example, according to the Department of Environment website under the heading "challenges", the website says, one of the major challenges is the lack of financial and technical resources.

Currently, there are only five to six staff who handle waste and pollution related matters Fiji wide as part of its waste management and pollution control unit. The report goes on to recognise Fiji as a regional leader in recognising the right to a healthy environment, having ratified multilateral environmental agreements as well as the human rights treaties I mentioned earlier. But, Sir, the report stressed that we must have a strong Ministry of Environment to fulfil those commitments.

An issue Dr. Boyd said had been raised repeatedly with him were problems with EIA or the Environmental Impact Assessments with members of the public expressing to him frustration with their inability to gain easily, timely and affordable access to important information, the lack of adequate consultation, constraints on the public's ability to participate in assessment processes, the poor quality of some EIA Reports and the lack of access to remedies. Some examples include proposed mining projects and the raising of the Wainisavulevu Wier in Naitasiri.

Sir, Dr. Boyd had heard from landowners about extensive mineral exploration activities affecting their lands without consultation and before the completion of any environmental assessment. Dr. Boyd agreed with me and many, many others and called the fee of \$4.85 per page for an EIA Report excessive, suggesting that it be waived for individuals and groups seeking to protect the environment and human rights. I personally think, Sir, that the EIA Report should be a public documents available to the public for free. This is basic transparency and good governance.

Sir, the Environment Management Act of 2005 provides for the appointment of an Environmental Tribunal but there is no publicly available information regarding its members, procedures or decisions. Rules governing the Tribunal were published in 2013 but the absence of other public information makes the process just as clear as mud. Dr. Boyd made an excellent suggestion, Sir, in encouraging Fiji to consider creating an online environmental registry that would make extensive information publically available including permit applications and decisions, pollution data and enforcement actions that are being taken and such a registry would enhance the public's ability to participate meaningfully in an environmental decision-making in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the following are comments gathered from our consultations with environmental law experts and conservationists working in and around Fiji and based on a number of the cases reported to them by communities. They all agreed, Sir, that the Department does not have enough expertise, capacity or resources to adequately implement the Act and EIAs.

Also highlighted, Sir, was an apparent lack of proper and meaningful consultation, and two cases from Lautoka are prime examples:

1. Field 40 in Lautoka: A cement factory is placed right at the edge of a large community with only a road separating the community from the cement factory. Here, families have been complaining about health, noise and many other issues associated with having a factory placed in their backyard.
2. Vakabuli, Paipai River between Lautoka and Ba: Representatives of a community complained about gravel extraction affecting all aspects of their livelihood. The human cost is high, Sir, generations of families have lived in the area and some risk losing their livelihood.

May I dwell briefly, Sir, on Terms of Reference (TOR). In some instances, the TORs which guide the content required of the EIAs have tendered to be generic rather than specific to the proposed development. A case in point, Sir, building a jetty at Mawi Bay had the same TOR as Magma Mines for mining in the Sigatoka River.

The TOR must be developed to reflect, not only the specific requirements of the law, but also to ensure that it is relevant to the type of development so that risks that are specific to certain developments are properly assessed. This requires persons with relevant expertise and or knowledge about the type of development and who are able to provide relevant input to the TOR.

The observations, Sir, is that the Department of Environment (DOE) staff do not seem to be able to critically review EIA reports; often times the TORs are not fulfilled though the EIA was approved and the reports are largely desktop surveys rather than new data. If we do not have suitably qualified people in Fiji, can we not ask our friends - Australia and New Zealand, in particular, to second us personnel with experience in their much more robust environmental regulation space.

My consultations found issues with the way in which EIA consultants are hired, Sir. The roster of the DOE-approved EIA consultants continues to include some that have undertaken and have been allowed to undertake their EIA consultancies with disregard to the TORs contrary to the EIA procedures.

Sir, the DOE must, in accordance with the Environmental Management Act, be equipped and be allowed to fully manage the whole EIA process which appears not to be the case at present. The extended manner in which the critical public consultations are to be conducted is ill-defined. The Environment Department fails to accompany and monitor the manner in which a consultant conducts an EIA, in particular, the extent and the integrity of the public consultations.

Currently, the Environmental Department frequently appears limited in its ability to monitor environmental issues to take proactive measures to mitigate against the environmental degradation and also to respond when members of the environmentally-concerned public draw its attention to cases of environmental degradation and seek its intervention.

Public consultations are frequently not properly advertised. They are held during working hours, they are not minuted, they are not attended by the relevant town council personnel senior DOE personnel, suggesting that they do not take the development and the EIA process seriously. At times it appears, as though the public is only included in a box ticking exercise in the pretence of public consultation process when in reality the decision has already been made that the development will proceed irrespective of the concerns of the potentially-affected community.

Sir, I know my time is running out. There is a lot more I would like to say and I will take the opportunity when I can, given the time, but as I wind up, Sir, in case I have not convinced the House yet, here is a short story of my own.

Last year some friends of mine in Nadroga needed my help to file a complaint to the Department about some dredging equipment which had come loose during a storm and had been thrown onto a reef just outside the mouth of the Sigatoka River. These friends called the Department which informed them that they have to fill out a complaints form which is not available on the website. So in order for my friends in Sigatoka to file a complaint, I had to go to the Department on McGreggor Road for a hard copy, scanned it, e-mailed it to Sigatoka for them to download, filled, printed it out, scanned and e-mailed back to the Department. This is a small inconvenience for me, Sir, but for people in the maritime and in areas where a lot of these degradation happens, out of site and out of mind as it were, this is a very difficult process.

I asked the question on the comments section of the Department's website on April 17th last year. Yesterday, 14th February, 2019, some ten months later, my comment was, and I quote from the website "still awaiting moderation", and my comment on the website last year was to request that the complaint form be made available on the website.

Mr. Speaker, as I end, I just want to congratulate, and I want to say “thank you” to whichever department of the Parliament put these messages on our desks on Monday. I dare say someone was listening to my maiden speech where I pointed out the amount of single-use plastic bottles that this House uses and I thank the Department for listening. Thank you very much, Sir, *vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member for her statement, and I now give the floor to the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of Opposition, Members of the House: I wish to thank the Honourable Member for raising this issue but unfortunately, the Honourable Member has made a number of allegations and generalisations.

Honourable Speaker, if you put it to perspective, some four decades ago, the level of attention on environment and what is the level of attention on the environment now; four decades ago, the quantum of industrial and commercial development and the quantum of industrial and commercial development now, Honourable Speaker, we are mindful of that.

The Honourable Member is quoting a preliminary report from the UN Environment envoy, which does not incorporate our submission. So, it is unfortunate ...

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- ...that she is quoting that report with authority but did not qualify as the preliminary Reports. It is very unfortunate, you should not do that.

Honourable Speaker, a key mandate for the Department of Environment is the protection of our natural resources, control and management of developments, waste management, pollution control and others. Honourable Speaker, the position at which the Department of Environment is, it is in a very critical and difficult position.

On one hand, we are entrusted by law to protect the environment, not only for the current generation but also for the future generation. People willy-nilly throw these words ‘sustainable development’ without understanding what it really means. It means that the life that we, the current generation are enjoying, the benefits from the environment and natural resources, it is our obligation that we will also ensure that the future generations are also able to enjoy the same benefits that we are enjoying from the natural resources environment.

However, the Department of Environment also has to understand that we are in the developing stage. We need to ensure that we do not become a police and a stumbling block and a wedge between growth in wealth and development proposals. When people come in this House and willy-nilly pick up selected sentences from the legislation and say that we are not doing our job, they do not understand the situation that we are in.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Absolutely.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- We are not the police, we are there to ensure that we promote growth and development but at the same time ensure that the intention of the legislation is delivered.

Honourable Speaker, to maintain control and the sustainable use of our natural resources, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool. Being a regulator, Honourable Speaker, we do

not do EIA. There is a misunderstanding that we do EIA, we are the regulator. There will be a conflict of interest if we are a regulator and at the same time, we are also undertaking EIA. No, we do not. We have a list of approved EIA consultants.

HON. MEMBER.- Who pays for this?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- What?

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Who paid for it?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- We do not pay. We get the developer to pay but we set out the terms of reference. Unlike what the Honourable Member has said, for every application, we got to undertake a survey and then develop a terms of reference. I want to see that particular terms of reference that was same, for a jetty and for a quarry.

Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Member has said in this House that there was a Terms of Reference which was for a jetty and for a quarry. I would want her to deliver it today. We want it, I want to see it, I will investigate it so that it does not happen again.

Honourable Speaker, now our Toppers and TELS Scholarship Award also includes Scholarships for Environment. The Honourable Minister for Economy listened to our submissions the last time when he went around getting submissions and noted also the issue about shortage of Environmentalists and we now have scholarships which we did not have before in the list. So, Honourable Speaker, we are looking at the long term. We are mindful of the sustainable dimension of this issue about environment.

Honourable Speaker, the aim of undertaking EIA is to predict environmental impacts of developing projects. What people are not understanding is, this is not only about the Environmental Impact. When the projects are undertaken, how about post project; how about post development? Once there is development, for example, let us say, a hotel, everyone is talking about the Environmental Impact when the hotel is being constructed, how about after the hotel is constructed where will the waste disposed go; where will the sewerage be disposed; where will the hotel waste be disposed - in an island? Where will the liquid waste be disposed? They are not thinking about this.

Honourable Speaker, we are now thinking about it. We are now thinking about it. We are interrogating this.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- The matter is before the court, do not talk about that issue. Do not argue, you know better.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, I am saying you are doing that.

HON.A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You are a lawyer, you should know that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Order!

You have the floor, Honourable Minister.



HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Honourable Speaker, as I said, it is a bigger thing than what we are just talking about here. We have an obligation, this Government has an obligation to the future generations.

Honourable Speaker, the EIA Unit was formally established under Section 12 of the Environmental Management Act 2005 requiring the Unit to examine and process development proposals received by or referred to it from approving authorities.

On an average, Honourable Speaker, the EIA Unit receives and processes 280 applications in a year. Honourable Speaker, that is quite a lot.

In 2018 alone, 71 applications were approved with conditions and the Honourable Member says that we are a rubberstamp. We are not a post office, Honourable Speaker, where one letter comes, you put a stamp and push it inside a box.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Of the 71 applications, four were refused.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- They have no idea.

(Honourable members interject)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- I will rather read only one page but I will make an impact, not like that Member there, he disappeared, saying something that no one can understand.

Honourable Speaker, the Government has been strongly committed to building and strengthening the capacities of personnel and processes within the Unit.

Prior to the enactment of it in the Year 2000, only one officer was responsible for the processing of the EIA. This number grew to 3 in 2006; later in 2014, the Department strengthened the EIA Unit, with the capacity to eight officers who are now stationed in the Central, Northern and Western Divisions to process EIA applications within the jurisdiction for the whole of Fiji, including the maritime islands.

Two new officers are now being recruited and they will be joining the team shortly.

Honourable Speaker, in terms of capacity-building for officers, officers have had EIA training overseas and locally in areas related to EIA.

Honourable Speaker, there are a number of areas that we are identifying, training for these officers, and we are also encouraging those officers who have lower level qualifications to upgrade their qualifications. Further to this Honourable Speaker, the Ministry has established an Internship Programme recently and recruited four graduates to assist us in the EIA process.

Honourable Speaker, there are more that I could speak on but due to time limitation, I wish to assure the House that we are taking this matter seriously. We are not a post office - we examine applications, we make decisions and where need be, we say 'no'. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement. I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to the Honourable Aseri Radrodro to make his Statement.

Poor Road Conditions

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to give my End of Week Statement in accordance with the Standing Orders and the Statement would be about the poor road conditions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this statement is necessary, given the high level of stress and high level of complaints received from commuters and road users on the status of road conditions around the country. But before I dwell on that, let me just state that road accessibility cuts across all Sustainable Development Goals, so it is necessary to make this End of Week Statement.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is just an unbelievable road status just about everywhere we travel, as vehicles continue to fall into huge and sharp potholes, or drivers risk accidents trying to dodge them. Even the recently buried potholes, stick out like mounds, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and it becomes a nightmare, just making a journey.

It is crucial to acknowledge that due to the poor road conditions affecting densely populated areas, people now have to leave the comforts of their homes to get to school and walk much earlier in the morning than what it used to be. Alternatively, returning home much later in the evening because of the traffic jam.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for example, the current Koronivia Road upgrade, with over three years of ongoing work, Government gives no regard to the plight of the workers, when they spend more than two hours to reach their homes around Nakasi and Nausori, even those going as far as Tailevu and Rewa. It becomes a nightmare. And to make it worse, is the lack of traffic officers to direct traffic during peak hours.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, this morning at Rewa Street, at a junction of Nailuva Road, two sets of small boys in school uniforms were struggling to cross this busy road because of police officers who usually man this spot were nowhere in sight around 8.15 a.m.

This morning's paper, Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the front cover page, the revelation by the Accident Compensation Commission, that \$1.6 million has been paid out last year for compensation to road accidents, victims and families and 300 other applicants have been received and are still being processed.

Whilst we accept that a lot of road accidents occur due to speeding and careless use of our roads, we must also acknowledge that a lot of accidents are also occurring because of the poor road conditions, trying to avoid potholes or *lovo* pits and loose gravels, these are very common accident contributor.

The question that we often ask in this august House, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is the high level of budget injected into the FRA over the years, as compared to the Public Works Department days. We have heard from colleagues throughout this week, the struggles experienced on our roads, in our maritime zones as well as in the Northern, Western and Central Divisions.

It would be remiss of us, Mr. Speaker, Sir, not to acknowledge the road improvements and access that has been done, streetlights as well as the tarsealing of roads, a welcome sight and experience. However, what is depressing is seeing perfectly completely new roads being torn up again, as has been done in the Denarau Back Road to accommodate some kind of pipe laying. Why

could this not be completed whilst the road was being constructed, so that we do not have to waste good material, Mr. Speaker, Sir? Who is paying for this additional work?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are now buses refusing to service many communities because of poor road conditions. In Moala village in Nadi, I was informed and experienced personally last week, the unbelievable road condition that it took us considerable time to reach the village from the main road, because we had to drive about 5 kilometres an hour to avoid our vehicle being damaged by the very huge potholes.

I was then informed that villagers had to walk these days for more than two hours from their village to the main road, because their road is in such a bad state that buses refuse to service it.

Taxis, Mr. Speaker, Sir, have to charge double prices for travelling from Nadi Town to the village of Moala, taking the advantage of the fact that many refused to drive there.

Similar incidences may also be experienced, Mr. Speaker, Sir, across Fiji, for example, in Koronivia where the road is yet to be tarsealed up to Lokia landing, roads in Rakiraki, Ba to Lautoka and also similar roads all around Fiji have similar incidences and experiences.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Sir, apart from the hazards of potholes, we now have the threat of landslides that pose a major risk to the lives of commuters. Lots of roads now have one lane access only, because of road slips. At Nasavu Village along the Sawani/Serea Road, it remains to be a one lane road over the last two years because of the road slip that has been there, without being attended to by the Fiji Roads Authority (FRA).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, given this is the only main road access to get through the higher Naitasiri terrain, we have a growing fear that one day we will wake up and are told that we are cut-off from the rest of the world, if the one way slip gives way totally.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is imperative that Government conducts an urgent independent audit of the status of our road conditions around the country, to enable them to do a systematic maintenance and repair of all our roads, instead of tackling them on an *ad hoc* basis.

The Office of the Auditor-General should be tasked to undertake this crucial exercise which is what we usually call, 'the performance audit'. This is necessary, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because it would allow Government to know whether the current arrangement with FRA needs change. Sir, 12 years in Government should have resolved any laxities of the past and the blame game should not be allowed anymore.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in our urban corridors, residents and businesses complain about road conditions. You just have to drive up to Samabula, Toorak, Valelevu, Pilling Road and other similar neighbourhoods, to experience these frustrating roads, even in Mead Road.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are also many rural roads that continue to be inaccessible today because of broken bridges that were washed away during cyclones a few years back. The former Minister for Roads and Infrastructure will be able to enlighten his new successor about them, so I shall not mention them again, but to simply remind all that the villages rely on these road access and bridges and the longer they are not repaired, there is the continued risk of people's lives daily. I do not know Mr. Speaker, Sir, if Government is aware that the FRA only acted to rectify poor road conditions in certain areas, after members of the general public, out of desperation and frustration, took to social media to air their grievances.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we know that heavy-laden vehicles and heavy deforestation is now a real threat to road users as confirmed by the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure yesterday. Landslides at Edinburgh Drive, the Lomolomo Slip, Veisari along the Queen's Highway, continue to pose a death threat. I ask a question on what is being done to ensure that these possible death traps are not exacerbated.

May I suggest for Government to maintain the old highway as a form of alternative relief, so that we do not have to experience what occurred in the Kasavu Slip two years ago, where the old road from Bau *Tikina* had to be used by commuters.

Most old tracks running along the Queen's Highway and Kings Highway are still accessible, they just need proper maintenance and upgrade. Perhaps, heavy-laden vehicles can even use these roads instead, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and only lighter vehicles can use the common roads where vulnerable hotspots still exist.

Whatever, it is we have to handle the weight on our roads, otherwise the LTA and Police simply have to invest in more weighing machines to conduct impromptu checks to address the stress on our roads and the experience of heavy traffic and heavy-laden vehicles which have become a hazard for our infrastructure. It is no use to adopt new technologies, like e-ticketing when value for money is not being derived.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on that note, I continue to ask the Government to consider dual cash and e-ticketing payment system to accommodate inaccessibility to top-up service providers. This will eliminate part of the stress our already everyday weary commuters face because of our current road conditions.

The Honourable Minister for Defence and Foreign Affairs in his role as Climate Champion under COP 23 when in Bonn in 2017, travelled on an electronic bike to the venue of their meeting as a step towards promoting environment-friendly transport modes in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I fear these electronic bikes will never be able to survive our roads. I had even suggested to the Honourable Minister for Economy to consider venturing into horses, instead of goats or maybe both.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. M. RADRODRO.- Government policies need to synergise and unless we get the relevant statutory authorities ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- ... and line Ministers to work out their commonalities and address them accordingly, we will continue to waste taxpayers' money and compromise the comfort and lives of our people.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I often have discussions with former Road Engineers for the Department of Roads, who lamented that had they been given the millions of dollars that FRA has now being given, our roads around the country would all have been cemented, like the Navuso Village Road. Perhaps, that is why the Government simply needs to bring back the PWD operations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I thank the Honourable Aseri Radrodro for his Statement. I now give the floor to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services, the Honourable Jone Usamate. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I would like to thank the Honourable Member for his Statement. As I was listening to his deliberation, the things that he talked about, I think if you look at what I am holding, you can see a hole. You can choose to see inside the hole, but if you open it up, it is actually a piece of paper and if you open it up further, you can see there is a whole lot more to it than what you are talking about.

The roads are not just about potholes. You can describe a certain thing by choosing to talk about one particular aspect but you need to look at the totality of it to get an overall appreciation of what the status of roads is all about, and that is what I have been hearing today. You have to look at the whole thing, you cannot just be selective about what you are talking about.

Talking about our roads, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and for Honourable Members of the House, currently we have around 7,600 kilometres of road in this country. Over the past 10 years, the length of roads that the FRA has taken over (unsealed roads) have increased by 2,000 kilometres over the past 10 years. So the volume of road maintenance that has to be undertaken, has dramatically increased.

FRA has now taken over the maintenance of a lot of sugarcane access roads. The quality of those roads, traditionally, was done at a very low standard. Now, FRA is taking over those roads because we need to make sure that the bus and RSL services can continue to be provided. So if you want to compare the status of roads now with the status of it 10 years ago, you are not comparing apples with apples, you have to look at the totality of what has happened.

FRA is now looking after 1,200 bridges; 8,220 streetlights, more and more footpaths. If you also look at what the Government has invested in the roads infrastructure, there has been an eightfold increase, eight times over, 800 percent increase in the amount of money that was spent on that. That shows the dedication that we have to making sure that we can have a good roading system in this country.

We have continued to undertake a lot of maintenance, renewal and replacement programmes. We know what the causes of the major road conditions that we had in the past - poor quality installation. If the quality of installation was poor in the past, we, in this generation will have to fix the poor quality that was there in the past.

Lack of maintenance, we have talked about what the practice used to be. The next time that we come to Parliament, I will give you a presentation on what can the Department of National Roads do to look at our investment in roads from the early 2000 to what it is today. I will make sure when I come back in April, I will give you that presentation. Poor construction materials, poor lateral drainage, all these were part of the problems that we have.

In 2018 to 2019, the planned total for sealed road rehabilitation is now 314 kilometres. There is another 179 kilometres that we completed by the end of 2018. So the volume of work is quite extensive. I will not talk about the rural. For the remote rural areas, there is a lot of work focussed on rehabilitating 130.5 kilometres in Navosa, Nadroga, Vakabuli and Ba, 93.7 kilometres in Vanua Levu and 60.6 kilometres of roads from the Central and Eastern Divisions.

Remote areas will continue to be served exclusively by unsealed roads. But road condition itself is a function of a lot of different things. It is a function of the quality of the materials that you

use, the methods of construction and the type of vehicles used. The size of vehicles that we have using our roads today is much much different from what we had 10 to 15 years ago. There are many more roads, there are bigger vehicles so if you believe that the conditions were the same 10 years ago today, it is completely different (all that needs to be taken into account), drainage maintenance all of these things can have a dramatic impact on the quality of the roads.

To ensure that road conditions in remote areas are maintained, the FRA is doing a number of things. First, it is looking at the materials that are being used in these roads, this has been the change that is taking place for the past 12 months.

FRA now has the intention to stop using river gravel in road construction over the next two to three years. Why is it stopping to do this? Because river gravel is an inferior material. We have been using this inferior material in the past where we were not being able to completely eradicate the problems that we have.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- Historically, river gravels have been used because of the significant shortage of quarry stone, as an easy source of road stones close to the works, but these roads tend to deteriorate more quickly than the roads made from quarry stone. So it is looking back at the process, we are fixing the process, fixing the quality of the inputs coming in to roads, to make sure that we can prevent the problems from happening in the future.

To counter that shortage of suitable materials, teams have gone up to remote areas, to source quarry sites to ensure that the source of road material is as close to the work site as possible. So it is a lot about processes, not just about, as I said here, you are pulling out figures from all over. There is no statistics, there is no data that you are talking about. You are describing the hole in the piece of paper...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- ... and articulating the indicators of how well the roading infrastructure is.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- The Fiji Roads Authority has harmonised and standardised material specification. In the past, in the old system that we used to have ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. J. USAMATE.-... there were more than 10 materials specifications that were used for different kinds of work; 10 different standards. So you could choose standard 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Now we only have two sets of standards to make sure that we have consistency.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. J. USAMATE.- Listen and learn, this is about process.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. J. USAMATE.- If you want to fix something, you have got to fix the process. If you have got a good process, you have a good outcome, that is what this Government is focussed on.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- We are focused on having an excellent process so that we can have a good outcome for the people of this country. The Honourable Radrodro may learn something from the kind of things I am talking about.

(Laughter)

With regards to processes and procedures, FRA has made significant changes over the past 12 months that will greatly assist this. FRA has restricted the maintenance element of its work and the maintenance crews now focus on maintenance and do not undertake capital improvements. So there are structural changes also taking place inside to make sure that we have a better outcome. FRA directly manages the maintenance programme to ensure that all aspects of maintenance receive the appropriate level of interest.

FRA has also carried out a reorganisation within its Delivery Team and has created a Highway Condition Team that inspects every road under the FRA Management at least once a month. That is what we have to do, to make sure that the work is taking place. Is it going to be, is it something that is going to improve overnight? No. This is a continual process. Process, process, process.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- That is what we are looking at. It is a process, it is continual improvement. Utopia is something that we never reach but that is about the journey to get there.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- The function of these teams is to identify deterioration areas, to find the remedial action and propose a timeline for the remedial action, develop trend analysis and then audit the completed works. So that process will continue to take place. We have to realise that right now, do you know what kind of season we are in right now? Is it the dry season or the wet season?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- It is the wet season. So in this season you will see that there is going to be a lot more challenges because of the fact that we have more rain. So sometimes there are stop-gap measures put in place but ultimately the remedial work will be put in place to make sure that we can get back the quality of work that we need.

In terms of the Ministry ...

HON. S. ADIMAITOGA.- Listen!

HON. J. USAMATE.- ...from the Ministry's point of view, we need to focus on the governance of the work that is undertaken.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. J. USAMATE.- We have put in place what I am talking about, the governance structures. FRA is supposed to ...

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- ... give us reports on a six-monthly basis and those things will be addressed, will be looked at, to make sure that they are delivering what they are supposed to be doing.

Currently, the Ministry is re-looking at the systems and processes that we use to monitor how well FRA is implementing its budget for the purposes of the service that it is supposed to provide. We will continue to strengthen monitoring and compliance functions to ensure that FRA is accountable for all the funds that is used.

The management of FRA recently introduced a separation of responsibilities in its tender review process to strengthen that governance function. It has a Risk Compliance Team, it has an Audit Team that operates fully outside the FRA processes. Once again we will try to make sure that we have strong governance. Any breach of FRA governance arrangements are investigated and reported directly to FICAC and the quality personnel are there to monitor the contracts awarded.

The current FRA structure provides for the engagement of highly qualified engineers and inspectors who travel extensively to identify issues, recommend actions and then monitor the timely completion and adherence to, once the work is complete. I notice that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is quiet because I believe that he is quite thankful that this Government fixed the road for him to travel comfortably from Nagigi to Bagasau on his way to his village. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I thank the Honourable Minister for his statement.

Honourable Members, for the purposes of complying with the Standing Orders with respect to sitting times, I will allow a Suspension Motion to be moved. I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

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

That under Standing Order 6 that so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 12.30 p.m. today to complete the End of Week Statements and, of course, Items 7 and 8 as listed in today's Order Paper.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to speak on this motion.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, as I have indicated we have one more End of Week Statement from the other side of the House and as agreed to by the Business Committee, we have Items 7 and 8 and thus the request for sitting beyond 12.30 p.m. today. Thank you Honourable Speaker, Sir.



HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. The floor is open if there is anyone wishing to take the floor at this stage? Honourable Member, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I wish to speak to the motion that is being proposed. We do agree to the extension of time and this time we just like to reiterate the needs if this is allowed for Government business, knowing that Friday is typically the day for Opposition, that your good self, Sir, would consider the hearing of the last two questions that are before the Order Paper.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are two questions left on the Order Paper. Sir, I know that everyone is raring to go home early today but we are kindly requesting as it is Opposition Day to complete the two questions, Sir, speaking to this motion to not just to allow that motion that is on the list but also the two questions. Given that it is suspended already, for those two questions to be allowed. Thank you Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member for the point that she raised. I have already made the ruling regarding the questions being carried over to the next sitting. It is not being denied, it is just being carried over and it will be heard in the first days of the new period of the sitting. So, I do not see any problem whatsoever with that. Are there any others who want to take the floor? There being none, Parliament will now vote.

The Question is:

That under Standing Order 6 that so much of Standing Order 23 (1) is suspended, so as to allow the House to sit beyond 12.30 p.m. today to complete Items 7 and 8 as listed on today's Order Paper.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

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

Honourable Members, I now give the floor to the Honourable Viliame Gavoka. You have the floor, Sir.

## **RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE END OF WEEK STATEMENTS**

### Water Woes in Drought-Stricken Areas

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I rise to make a statement relating to the water woes in drought stricken areas. I make the statement Honourable Speaker as the water situation in Fiji is quite acute.

Listening to my colleagues from the other side highlighting the accomplishments of FijiFirst in many areas of our lives, especially in infrastructure, with the last Speaker, I am reminded of that old English idiom that says "the proof is in the pudding" which means that you can only comment

after you have tasted the cooking. The people of Fiji have tasted everything cooked by FijiFirst and is not good.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, let me just ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- ... highlight a few areas where there are very acute water woes and in my area from Natadola affecting villages such as Vusama, Visabasaba, Batiri, Togobula, Nalele, Kabisi, Vavinaqiri, Navutu, Lomawai, Kubuna, Korokula, Tau, Bavu, Momi and Nabila. These are villages and the settlements around them. These are areas that have huge water problems.

When you visit them, Honourable Speaker, you will see as usual when you meet and you want to go to the bathroom, the toilets are very nice (they build some very nice toilets), but you press that button to flush the toilet, there is no water. It is tragic that this is happening in an area where FijiFirst Government has spent \$45 million over the last five years for the wealthy to come to Fiji and play golf for four days.

Imagine if the \$45 million had been spent on the water system from Natadola with all those little settlements up to Yako.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- That is a lot of money and I have always spoken in Parliament, I think once or twice about how I saw a woman in Natadola drawing water from the well using a bucket and a rope. I was driving by, Honourable Speaker, and I had to look twice, it looked surreal that in an area where so much money has been spent on leisure and on golf, a woman was still drawing water from the well with a rope and a bucket.

That, Honourable Speaker is a tragedy with FijiFirst and I would wish that they relook at their priorities and do what is right for the people of Fiji. What I speak about from Natadola to Yako, can they replicate it in other parts of Fiji namely; the Tebara plains, Labasa, Veisari, Davuilevu, the Rewa areas, Wainadoi, Mau, Nabukavesi and Naboro. These are just some of the areas that come to mind but I know it is all across our country. Honourable Speaker, what it comes down to is a matter of priority.

Let me just put on my hat as a hotelier: In the hotels, you have to make a choice between the heart of the house and the outside of the hotel, what people see. The heart of the house is the water, the electricity, the air-conditioning, the kitchen where you produce the comforts that are fundamental to guests' comforts. The frontage is the facade, the grounds, et cetera.

What is happening with FijiFirst today is that, they are neglecting the heart of the house. Too many of the projects are so grandiose, they are good for Elections. They make everyone who comes to Fiji say "Wow, things have improved here but the heart of the house is still very much in misery."

I spoke once, Honourable Speaker, about the Terminal Building in Nadi, which is beautiful and the road to Denarau, which is also beautiful, but on the periphery of Nadi, people are going to the river and the creek for their ablutions. In Nadi hospital, there was a saying in Nadi at one time, in Fijian, you say “*Valenibula*”, in Nadi they used to call it “*Valenimate*” because they say “You go there to die” such is the condition of the hospital. This is where the priority needs to be made by the FijiFirst Government.

Let us focus more on the heart of the house and less on what looks good and what makes them look good and perhaps would win them Elections.

But, Honourable Speaker, as we know that throwing money around will not win you friends. I think, Dr Mahathir said lately, when he was campaigning in Malaysia, where the Prime Minister then was throwing money around. He said; “Throwing money around, people will not like you if you do that.” You have to look at what is more important and I refer here specifically to the heart of the house. I know he wins Elections to give away a thousand dollars in huge stadiums and all the accolades that go with it, but I think from the last Elections, FijiFirst would have learnt that that was not the right thing to do.

As I have said in this House, had it not been for the rain during the last Elections, they would have lost the Elections.

As I have said in this House, there I just reminded them that majority in 2014 from all the parties were more than 101,000 votes. Their majority over all the parties in 2018 was only 147. That must be telling you something. Their throwing money around will not help them. They need to look at the misery of the people at the grassroots level and what are so fundamental to it.

Honourable Speaker, there is a sad case about Bavu. Bavu gave their land to where the Hotel Marriott and Momi would locate their water tank. They asked Government if they can also benefit from the water. They were told, “No, you cannot.” This, Honourable Speaker, should behave us or should make us think about this development. You cannot build a super luxury hotel in Momi, which is beautiful, over water-bungalows, et cetera, Marriott - Five or Six Stars but then the water that goes to Momi does not benefit or does not go to the villagers of Momi, does not go to the villages of Bavu and does not go to the other villages around the area.

The SDL Government built the road from Momi and Natadola and indeed in my area in the village, when the water ....

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, that gives me another two more minutes.

Honourable Speaker, when they connected the water from Natovo to Shangrila, the SVT government made sure all the villages benefited from the water, and their leader is sitting here. That is the way we should do things. You cannot build a luxury resort in the far-corners of Fiji and neglect the people around. They should benefit from that development. Yes, they get electricity; yes, they are getting telephones, et cetera; but water is so fundamental to all of these, Honourable Speaker.

Let me end by saying that so much money has been spent. All this huge money that is being spent is to be re-prioritised and let us focus less on public relations on how well you look good, but focus more on how you alleviate the misery of the ordinary people at the ground. Peace, This,

Honourable Speaker, should be the priority of any government, and I stand here today to say that when our turn comes in 2022, the people will come first to look after the people at the ground to have better infrastructure.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker, I hope they can take note of this, instead of dillydallying with all the Reports and all of the PhD that I hear from the other side of the House.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member for his statement. Honourable Members, I now give the floor to the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services, the Honourable Jone Usamate. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. J. USAMATE- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Talking about puddings, actually the proof is in the eating, not in the pudding itself. Talking about people having faith in the Government, how do we know whether people have faith in a party or not? You look at which side of the House they sit on.

(Laughter)

Now, in looking at this particular question, I think the Honourable Gavoka got a bit carried away. I was expecting him to be talking a lot more about Drought-Stricken Areas but he talked about a whole of other things, and while there, I did not know where he was going.

But in terms of drought in this particular question, I will focus my response in the following three areas:

- What are they currently doing;
- How are we trying to forecast so that we can make sure that our interventions are timely and meet the needs of people; and
- What do we hope to do in the future; what are we to do to mitigate all these things in the future?

Water Authority of Fiji (WAF), which is responsible for water, has got the Strategic Action Plan to have Drought Mitigation Measures; how do we deal with drought. This plan was developed in 2015 and still forms the basis of what we do, in order to address drought. It has short term, medium term and long term strategies that need to be done. The Plan looks at immediate actions and also things that we need to do into the future and it include things like constructing temporary dams, the use of sand bags, use of Mobile Water Treatment Package Plants, increase in water carting trucks when they are needed through the engagement of Plant Hire Services.

Currently, WAF has two more Mobile Package Plants that are used for major planned water shutdowns. The plan also looks at short to medium term solutions for the mitigation of droughts in all of its existing water supply systems through using Capital Works Programmes such as a non-revenue water programme, upgrading works and integrated management activities at its water catchment areas.

One of the programmes that we have is developing new reservoirs. There is a whole lot of new reservoirs that have been developed currently; twelve new reservoirs are being built around the country; in Suva there are two; Toorak and Tacirua East, Nausori, Raralevu, Namau, Nadi, Nawaicoba, Nadi Hospital and Lolobalavu.

In relation to the issues about Nadi Hospital, there is a \$2.1 million project going there and that should be completed before the second half of this year. So, Government is already one step ahead of what we are talking about.

We recognise the programme, we put in place the solution, the solution is implemented and the problem will be addressed. So Nawaicoba, Nadi Hospital, Lolobalavu, Lautoka Hospital, Phluggers, I hope I pronounce that correctly, Naikabula and Ba, in Tauvegavega and Baleivuto, so all of these reservoirs are being developed as part of the strategy for drought mitigation.

We also have the big programmes that we have on water carting. The rural carting schedule is for all the drought-affected areas including out in the islands, Vatulele, Yasawa, the Lau Group, Batiki, Yanuca. Cikobia, Naelelevu; all of this work is done very closely with the Divisional Commissioners, so if there is a need for water to be brought to a particular island, we will make sure that that water gets there. The budgetary allocation, the money that we have set aside has increased from \$3 million to \$6 million. That is doubling, a 100 percent increase of the money that has been set aside for this sort of exercise.

Providing access to safe drinking water in rural and per-urban areas: We have the Rural Water Supply Programme that covers the provision of safe drinking water to over 133 villages, settlements and health facilities.

There are 38 projects in the Central Division, benefitting more than 7,000 people, 15 projects in the Eastern Division, benefitting more than 2,000 people and 27 projects in the Western Division, benefitting almost 5,000 people and 53 projects in the Northern Division benefitting 10,000 people. Yes, there are places that water needs to be supplied but there is a definite plan in place. We only have limited buckets of money and we use the money that we have to try to address those problems when we can.

In addition, 30 more villages will receive access to water through the installation of the Ecological Purification System (EPS). That is going to cost \$27 million. We put our money where our mouth is. This includes 18 villages in the Central Division, five in the Eastern Division, two in the Western Division, and five in the Northern Division. Unlike the Honourable Gavoka, our place is not just where we come from, our place is the whole of Fiji.

The Government funds 70 percent subsidy for assistance that are allowed for the collection and storage of rain water by Fijians. So we are encouraging people that God is giving us water from the heavens, we will help you to capture and harvest that water. Do not just let it flow down into the rivers and streams, capture it and harvest it and we give you incentives to do that.

The eligible households can construct nursery base and Government will provide the 5,000 litre water tanks, \$4.5 million has been set aside for that. To date, 10,733 of these tanks have been distributed nationwide, not just in my area, but in all of Fiji.

That has benefitted the population of more than 50,000, including the Rewa Delta. Expanding access to water reticulation system-water sources and water treatment plants. We have got plans in there to increase the capacity in new and existing areas. Water Treatment Plants are targeted for Deuba, Waiwai in Ba, Vunidawa, Nagado, Savusavu, Levuka and Nabouwalu. For the water distribution projects, \$51.7 million has been set aside for this.

We have programmes also on Non-Revenue Water Reduction Project. That means the water that is escaping from the existing pipes, we want to fix that and we are working together with the external consultants - Fukuoka WaterWorks from Japan and others are working together with us.

The Water Catchment Management Programmes: Surveys for new water services by undertaking hydrological study, so we are looking for water sources, identifying these new water sources. The new ones are being looked at in Deuba, Naboro in the Central Division, Nawaka, Teidamu, Mosi, Waikubukubu in Nalau in the Western Division, Vakadere in Bua, Wainivasa in Taveuni, Matani in Labasa and Driti in Lekutu in Bua.

Electrical Upgrading Project: Installing new generators and switchboard systems to ensure sufficient and reliable power supply to WAF facilities, because in lot of cases we have to use electricity to pump the water up and get them to the people that need them. So that is the first thing that they do - the current plans.

Secondly, we are trying to forecast, we are trying to be intelligent. We are using the service of the Fiji Meteorological Services - early action rainfall watch. The intent is to provide disaster managers with the brief summary of recent rainfall patterns, particularly meteorological drought and the rainfall outlook for the coming months. So this is the ongoing programme.

We know that we have meteorological drought current in place at Penang, in a three months' time scale and at Rotuma at a 3 to 6, 12 months' time scales. If we know where there is a likelihood of drought taking place, we are already putting aside the processes and the plans to address that when it happens. So, through this, the intensive use of forecast we will be able to address the problems when they do happen.

Majority of stations in the Western Division were in a meteorological drought watch at the six months' time scale. Most of the stations in the Central Division experienced very wet conditions on a six months and 12 months' time scale.

Rainfall outlook - Alert Dry 2 is in place at most of the stations in the Western Division while Alert Dry 1, they are classified in different parts of Fiji, where there is likelihood of drought and as a result, plans are put in place to mitigate against these sorts of things.

In the future, we are looking at long term alternative water sources. Right now, in the Rewa River Water Supply Scheme, we are looking at the construction of about 40 megalitre water treatment plant, a 10 megalitre reservoir and a construction of a 26 kilometre pipeline. That is expected to commence this year, part of the three-year project that will address the water needs from the Korovou area right down to Lami. It will affect all of these areas.

In Vatutu in Nadi, the construction of a new Pump Station at the banks of the Nawaka River, including a new package water treatment plant and reservoir. We expect to commence this into the future, probably in 2020.

A new water source from Buabua, Lautoka, construction of new pump station at the banks of the Teidamu Creek in Lololo, including the pipelines, et cetera, and a packaged water treatment plant that exist in Buabua Water Treatment Plant. We expect to commence with that in the year 2020.

So all of these plans are being put in place, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to try to forecast where problems can happen to improve what we already have and develop new water sources for the future so that we can mitigate on the impact of drought for our population. This is one Government that puts the livelihood of its people as a most important thing.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. J. USAMATE.- And we look after everyone in this country. In this Party, we do not have this area, this area and my area; everyone is our area, our country is our area.

We provide the service and that is why the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and that is why we sit on this side. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

I thank the Honourable Minister, for his statement. Honourable Members we will move on to the next agenda item on the Order Paper. I know the hours is running late.

### **2019 AMENDED SITTING CALENDAR - ADOPTION OF**

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call on the Leader of Government in Parliament, the Honourable Inia Seruiratu to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

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

That Parliament adopts the Amended Sitting Calendar for 2019 for the April to November period.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to speak on this motion.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, let me again, thank you for allowing this motion to be discussed very quickly before we adjourn. This has already been deliberated upon during the Business Committee Meeting yesterday, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

To the Honourable Members of the House, the Business Committee did discuss the need to review the Sitting Calendar for the period from April to November for a few of these reasons;

1. This is a balancing act, we need to look at the work of the Government, given the schedules that are in place;
2. The work of the Committees is very, very critical for the functioning of Parliament and I must acknowledge the Chairs of the various Committees and the Deputy Chairs and all the Committee Members for the work undertaken and we need to continue with this; and
3. It has been raised by the Government Whip during the Business Committee Meetings that most of the Committees are finding it difficult to cope with the amount of work and, therefore, this was again considered as an item during the deliberations of the Business Committee.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, what are the major differences in the new Sitting Calendar? You would notice that we have taken away the March and July Sitting. Initially, Parliament was scheduled to meet from 11th to 15th March and likewise in July from 15th July, 2019 to 19th July, 2019. Those

have been deleted and again, for the reasons that I have stated, particularly to allow the Committees to do their work, apart from the other schedules that we have.

We have now completed February and April Sitting remains as it is. Perhaps, the new inclusion is the budget delivery address which was initially scheduled for the 31st but now the Budget Address is on 7th of June. Therefore under the Constitution, we will have a week's break from the week of 10th June to 14th June, and the Budget debate will now take place from 17th June to 21st June.

The other change in the calendar would be in the month of August. Initially, we had Parliament scheduled to sit from 12th August to 16th August but that has been moved a week earlier for Parliament to sit in August from 5th August to 9th August because the week of 12th August to 16th August is when we will have the Pacific Islands Forum (PIFS) Meeting for the Leaders and thus, the request for us to move. Otherwise, the rest remains unchanged and we hope that Parliament will endorse this new sitting calendar as discussed during the Business Committee Meeting. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion and each Member may speak for up to 20 minutes. At the end of the debate, we will have a right of reply from the mover. The floor is open.

Honourable Tikoduadua, you have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I thank the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament for his motion.

Honourable Speaker, the National Federation Party (NFP) as you are aware from the proceedings of the Business Committee, opposes the reduction of the current year sitting of Parliament by 10 days or two sitting weeks. This would mean that in the current year, Parliament will sit only for 35 days, including the sitting in February with a few hours sitting for the delivery of the Budget which is now on 7th June, 2019. This also excludes the Opening Session of Parliament which is only for maiden speeches and the last sitting in November which is for the opening of the new year of Parliament.

Honourable Speaker, the NFP believes that we are doing grave injustice to the taxpayers of Fiji. As it is, without the reduction, the Parliament will only sit for 40-odd days, Mr. Speaker, almost half of the sitting days of Parliament in a calendar year before 2006.

The reason given in the Business Committee and as expressively mentioned by the Leader of the Government in Parliament, that the backlog of reports had to be cleared before Standing Committees needed to sit more often. Honourable Speaker, I believe and we believe that this is not a very good excuse and a lame excuse for that matter. Ten additional days, Honourable Speaker, to facilitate the so-called Committee sittings will not clear the backlog.

For two years, not including last year, there was no Parliament sitting at all for at least five months each year, or in total 10 months. This period only includes the time between the weeklong session of maiden speeches after the opening of Parliament in September, to a new sitting the following year in February. No backlog was cleared, Honourable Speaker. Let me give you an example, Honourable Speaker.

In May 2016, the reports of the Electoral Commission and the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) were referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights for scrutiny and



to report back to Parliament. The Committee's Report failed to reach the Parliament Chambers for more than two years until it was dissolved on 1st October, 2018. Of course, the Committee looked at the other reports, I admit, and the Chairperson was also the Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee.

But, Honourable Speaker, 28 months is a long time. Therefore, if nothing was done in 10 months, then what can we expect in 10 days, Honourable Speaker, extracted from Parliament sittings possibly to clear the backlog.

Honourable Speaker, the backlog was well known to the Members of the Business Committee, at least six of us, and most certainly to the four Honourable Members of Government in the Committee. But the calendar was agreed to unanimously both, in the Committee and in Parliament on 28th November, 2018.

The point that I am trying to make, Honourable Speaker, if any Standing Committee wants to work diligently and efficiently, work can succeed and one must not forget that all Committees are chaired by Government Members only. The Chairpersons are supposed to be the drivers of their respective Committees.

Let me give you an example, Honourable Speaker, upon the appointment of an Opposition Member as the Public Accounts Committee Chairperson on 28th November, 2014, albeit after failed objections from Government, three Volumes of the Auditor-General's Report was scrutinised and the Report was tabled in Parliament on 11th May, 2015 - five and a half months after the formalisation of the Committee.

Things, Honourable Speaker, have changed after the Committee's composition changed and now the checked history of the past, sealed by the changes to the Standing Orders is repeating itself. Therefore, Honourable Speaker, work efficiency and effective time management are the key to completing any task at hand.

At this juncture, Honourable Speaker, I would just like to also bring to your attention again and you have this document with you from the Business Committee and with the attention of the House, that Parliament has 62 Annual Reports to debate, 61 up until 2018 and, of course, the additional one that was tabled by the Select Committee on the Police Report 2017 – 2018, so 62 reports to be tabled in this House. A reduction of 10 days or 2 weeks sitting in two months, does not do any service to this kind of record, Honourable Speaker, which justifies fully why we should be sitting on the other 10 days. So there cannot be any further justification why 10 days would change anything at all.

Honourable Speaker, if we are so concerned about the Parliamentarian allowance for sitting and secondly, the reduction of two sitting days because of budgetary constraints and in that regard, I would suggest maybe, if funding is any issue, then maybe we should do away with morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea at the expense of taxpayers.

But you will remember also, Honourable Speaker, from that time in Veiuto, Members had to buy their own lunch. So I am not actually suggesting anything new. If it was a budgetary issue that we are actually reducing sitting days, Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Stick to the topic!

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- I am sticking to the topic, Honourable Attorney-General.

In any event, if some Honourable Members of the House also want to reduce the sitting of this House because they cannot tolerate Parliament.

Honourable Speaker, we, therefore, reiterate our position and state our strong opposition as in the Business Committee with the reduction of Parliament Sittings as contained in this motion.

I thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the, Honourable Member for his contribution. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you have the floor.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir.

On behalf of the SODELPA Group in the Opposition, we reiterate our position in the first instance when the calendar was discussed in the Business Committee on Tuesday and we thank you, Honourable Speaker, for allowing us to go back and consult which we did. Then we came back to the last meeting of the Business Committee before this motion was brought into the House.

At the meeting, Honourable Speaker, Sir, we had asked for reconsideration. Instead of reducing, we should have stuck with the same programme and this was the view of the Members of Caucus but also some of the Members of the SODELPA Caucus had asked for more time for the Committees. More time does not necessarily mean more days. Perhaps some Honourable Members will recall that at a workshop that was organised, certain Members had asked for not restricting the number of hour per day or sitting per day of the Committees.

But we also understand, Honourable Speaker, Sir, the machinery of democracy. We brought in our concerns, we were outnumbered in the Business Committee. While we have our reservation, we respect the majority in the Business Committee that voted for the change. We are also mindful that we are going to be looking at our Standing Orders again and while we do that, perhaps we should re-look at the Chairmanship of the Committee, particularly the Public Accounts Committee, Honourable Speaker, Sir, which by convention had been the role played by the Opposition.

I believe under your leadership we can continue to have a very conciliatory atmosphere in the House and perhaps in time, there will be favourable consideration to that suggestion. Also the fact that the Opposition in the last Parliament had asked for half day sitting on Friday, perhaps we could also look at that again as we go along and rather than suspending Standing Orders to allow us to sit a full day on Fridays, we could make it a standing procedure to sit a full day on Friday and perhaps also on normal sitting days and not worry about Standing Orders and just continue until we finish the business of the House, Honourable Speaker Sir.

With those few words and with the reservations of some Members of the SODELPA Caucus about the reduction in the number of days and perhaps affecting our profile, people are watching us now on television. I would like to perhaps encourage all Members, particularly I ask the Ministers in those period when we are not in the House, that you open your doors to the Members of the Opposition to come in with our request.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Our doors are always open.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Thank you very much. No we hear, now you know. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

I thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his contribution to the debate. Does anyone else wish to take the floor? Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Yes. Honourable Speaker, let me also contribute to the debate on this and it is very, very disappointing that early in the year we are already thinking or reducing the number of sittings.

Honourable Speaker, where was the thought process with FijiFirst when they first set the calendar, where was it? That is one thing that I have noticed with this Government; the thought process is very, very poor. As an example, today we moved Parliament from Veiuto to here. In the Opposition Chambers are 24 people who have to share a space that was only sufficient for about 12 people.

I do my reading of my papers in the kitchen and someone came along and said, “You are a Member of Parliament why are you reading your papers in the kitchen?” This is the lack of thought process by FijiFirst when they brought Parliament here, not creating the facilities for us and now proven by what we are debating today. We had set out in November, prepared ourselves for nine meetings of Parliament, now we are told, surprised, that is going to be reduced to seven. We have lost the votes in the Business Committee, majority have prevailed but let me ....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You had four Members, we had four Members.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Let me perhaps chart the way forward that as indicated by our leader that we can do more in the sittings. In New Zealand, they meet into the nights likewise in the House of Commons. We can also meet into the night - Monday to Friday. Our people want us to work, SODELPA is ready to work, to do work for the people of Fiji. They voted for us to be in Parliament and if you look at the result of the voting, they want people to come and work in Parliament.

We are prepared to work, if they are going to reduce it, yes, reduce it but increase of the hours. We can relook at the process that we follow in this House. For instance, we only have eight questions a day. We can go to twenty because if reduced, we can go to twenty and we can relook at the way we conduct the questions and answers. The Minister’s today get 20 minutes for a substantive question, another 20 for supplementary, another 20 for anything else; the time is wasted on their side.

We have visited jurisdictions, we have visited Parliaments in other parts of the world where you are given one minute to ask questions and four minutes reply from the other side. In some Parliaments, we do not even ask questions on notice. These are the things we can do to make our Parliament more effective. If you want to reduce sittings, relook at the process of how we do things.

Motions, Honourable Speaker, even if they own today, their days are from Monday to Thursday, make allowances for the Opposition to have a motion also during those periods. You won the arguments, it will go your way but at the same time, do justice to the people of Fiji who voted us here, and let us do more out of the reduced sittings that has been forced upon us. That is my dear wish, Honourable Speaker, that we came here to work and we can do a lot within the seven days that we have been reduced to. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Attorney General, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir. Mr. Speaker, just to clarify a couple of issues. Yes, Parliament was moved from Veiuto to here for very good reasons. We had to actually remind us of a terrible part of our history and this obviously, many shenanigans took place as many of them were there too.

Mr. Speaker Sir, this Parliament also represents the fact that democracy actually when Fiji became independent, this was the very Chamber that we started off with. Of course, the building here itself represents that solid way forward that we are going to take this country forward. However, as has been highlighted on a number of occasions, we have said that parts of the Judicial offices from here will move to Veiuto and plans are already underway, they know about it.

We have also said in this Parliament that the plan is that we are going to have each Member of Parliament with their own individual offices; that is the entire goal. It does take time for the Judicial Office to move out, we have to make sure that the building is actually secure. In fact in the later part of this year, parts of the Judicial Offices will actually move out there. They need to be patient.

Mr. Speaker Sir, they would harp on about there being 18 of them cramped up in an office. There were 32 of us cramped up in a very small space. We still have 27 cramped up in our office. When we come to Parliament, we go to those offices, Ministers and backbenchers included, that is a fact. They keep on whingeing about things like that.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Parliament can become very effective also if they stop meandering around. Look at the types of supplementary questions they ask, they are not even supplementary questions. They are making statements. There is already an effective question time. Go and study the British Parliament, go and study the Australian Parliament, they do not stand up and make the kinds of comments that they make.

Also, Mr. Speaker Sir, those Parliaments, the Opposition do not lie to Parliament, do not misrepresent facts like they continue to do all the time and that is when you have efficacy.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- We can also point to instances where wrong information was passed from the other side, Honourable Speaker. So, let us not use the word lying here, please.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, your point is taken. You have the floor, Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker Sir, there are always liberal with the truth or economic with the truth. We have seen a case in point about the figures that were touted yesterday. Mr. Speaker, the reality is that Parliament is not the only way to actually measure Government's performance. Yes, Parliament is when Government Members ask questions, we are in Government, they ask us questions, there is no problem with that.

By shortening or reducing two of the sitting months, it does not necessarily mean that they cannot ask us questions. They can ask us questions but the reality is that the people of Fiji, like in any other democracy, when they vote a party to Government they expect Government to do the work and the Government has to go and do the work through their Ministers, through the implementation of their policies and that is how it has an impact on the ground.

The other point also that this Parliament also has to do is review the various reports that come before this Parliament and we are lagging behind with 81 Reports. There is no point just simply coming to Parliament, having a bit of a circus here and then go away. The reality is ....

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- It is a circus!

With these reports, 61 reports have to be scrutinised. It is not just a question of scrutiny, they have to be tabled here. We have to debate them. When are we going to do that if the reports are not prepared? So, Mr. Speaker Sir, that is the reality of what is actually happening on the ground.

Mr. Speaker Sir, in your wisdom as you indicated in the Business Committee that we have to get through these reports. The people of Fiji actually wants us to be answerable in that fashion, not just simply for you to ask those questions. Those reports are actually provided with a lot of food for thought, for policy implementation, where policies are being implemented, we have perhaps some of the ministries are not doing well. That is what they should be focused on and how we can actually bring about a particular level of intellectual honesty to these debates.

There is no intellectual honesty in that respect and the people of Fiji want to hold all of us accountable. Let us not insult their intelligence and please do not say that in the Business Committee that we hold a majority. We do not have a majority. There are four from the Government side; the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament, our Whip and myself and the Honourable Leader of Opposition, the Leader for NFP and one other nominee from NFP and also one other nominee from SODELPA.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Deputy Speaker is there as well.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- The Honourable Deputy Speaker has no voting rights. The Deputy Speaker always goes as an observer, Honourable Pio Tikoduadua knows that. He should know that, he was a Member from our side when he was on the right side. So, Mr. Speaker Sir, it is incorrect to say that.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- They are the comments I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker Sir. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Bulitavu, I will give the floor to the Honourable Salote Radrodro first before I give the floor to you. You have the floor, Honourable Salote Radrodro.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you Honourable Speaker and I acknowledge the comments already made by our side of the House in regards to this motion and I believe Honourable Speaker, when the initial table of sitting was approved in this House, there was that intent that we sit in those nine sittings which has now been reduced to seven. There is a saying that goes that, “there are many ways to skin a cat”. If indeed the reduction by two weeks is to be able to sufficiently cover the volume of reports that the Committees have to cover, Honourable Speaker, may I highlight that if we

had stuck to the original Standing Orders, I believe we would have moved on with the Committee work.

The changes in the Standing Orders took away the Deputy Chairmanship from the Committees, Opposition, and in that way, because now in this term, they have lost six seats to this side of the House there is lesser backbenchers on their side so helping the Chair and the Deputy Chair of the Committees from the Government's side and with their Ministerial portfolio were to cover, we have even come across instances whereby the Committee has been put on hold because the Chair and the Deputy Chair were not available.

This is because, Honourable Speaker, if the Deputy Chair was still with the Opposition, Committee work would have still carried on.

Furthermore, Honourable Speaker, in the Committee work we have heard that there is a big volume of Annual Reports for us to cover. These Annual Reports are outdated. They date as far back as 2015 and because the Ministers responsible have failed to table those Reports on time, if the tabling of those Reports were timely, we would not have that backlog.

Also, Honourable Speaker, if we look at the Standing Orders, No.1 duty of the Standing Committees is to look at the legislative processes. That is our major role in my view but that role has been taken over by the scrutiny of out-dated Annual Reports, and this is something that the Government side really need to look at and not use it as an excuse to reduce the number of sitting weeks.

As I had already mentioned, Honourable Speaker, the nine weeks as initially tabled in this House was in my view a good time for us to come and sit as Members of Parliament and be able to debate on constituency issues that are brought into the House. The justifications and the reasons given of having to take away two full weeks, in my view, are unjustifiable.

If we are to keep those two weeks like I said, we can look at ways and means to be able to still cover those two weeks that we are going to lose now. That is the sitting in March and the sitting in July, and particularly, Honourable Speaker, with the recent national disasters like cyclones, there needs to be more sitting in that House so that we are able to bring in constituency issues that are relevant and important to the people. Those are the peoples' priorities and we are here to bring them into the House.

Honourable Speaker, those are my contributions and my earnest request that we relook at how we can cover the two weeks within the reduced seven weeks. We can go beyond the 4.30 p.m. timeline or we can sort of review the process, as alluded to by the Minister of Infrastructure, to relook at the process, I am sure we still can cover the two weeks that the other side is trying to take away from the nine weeks initially agreed upon.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member, for your contribution. I now give the floor to the Honourable Mosese Bulitavu.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I rise to contribute to the debate on the motion before the House saying that we have already made our commitment in the Business Committee respecting the vote that was taken there, Sir, which means we will have to support, given the standing that you have already taken.

But, let me raise some issues in regards to the changing of this yearly Calendar. Given that we have been supplied with this black file at the beginning, we were provided with a coloured Calendar. This is just another waste of taxpayers' money, Sir, printing with all the resources and the efforts have been done, et cetera.

Again I think this is poor planning in terms of Government not liaising with the Legislature and also it makes it very hard. Government cannot just come after one day and just pluck a thought from the air and try to change things according to what they want.

These are some of the things that people will be concerned about. We will go back to them and say, "Why do they have to reduce the sittings? The main reason why Government wants to reduce the Sittings is just to evade our discussion on debates and questions here.

Looking at the level of the Honourable Ministers answering questions, Sir, they do not really answer the questions, they are very evasive and also some of the answers they have given in this House are probably just coming from the Honourable Minister for Economy, who is in central control of the whole Cabinet, I think. Mr. Speaker, Sir, again this is not personalising. Every time we hear them telling each other the answers.

Again, I will concur with Honourable Radrodro, given that most of the pending work which now you have allowed after the dissolution of the last Term of Parliament, to go into the various Committees, was a result of the Honourable Minister not tabling the Report on time.

Not only that, Sir, when Committees make Reports and table them to Parliament, again I think you will come to know from the secretariat that the secretariat has about 14 days to write to the relevant Minister for them to reply to the recommendations and the Committee awaits those recommendations, they do not come on time.

When a Ministry comes to present on a new Annual Report, the recommendations of the old Annual Report have not been attended to, the checks and balance within our Parliamentary system and how the Executive Government complies with that, it all adds to the delay we face in this august House, Sir.

This has been a problem since Day One when the FijiFirst Government was sworn in, I think they are still confused. The very change of the Calendar is a sign of a very confused Government, who from the first day, does not have a plan, a clear path of what they have been doing.

If you see the events after the Elections, Sir, when they were all locked up at Level 9, the reasons stated by the Honourable Minister for Economy and Attorney-General for why they were there was that, they were at a very strategic meeting to address low-lying fruits.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again it shows that the direction was not clear from the start. They were not even sure whether they will come back to that side of the House or not, it is by luck, Sir, that they are sitting on that side, but it will not be very long. Again, Sir ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order,order!

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- ... we need some clear leadership from the Honourable Prime Minister and also his team on that side, and this kind of decision cannot be taken in haste, it has to be dove-tailed with what the Parliament has already put in its Calendar and the Executive

Government cannot interfere with the programmes that Parliament has already earmarked for the months that we have.

Again, for example, if you take away March and July, and if there are urgent issues happening in that month, how will Parliament address that? In a space of one month we will come back for urgent issues, Sir, that should only be dealt with ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Read your Standing Orders.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- ...Urgent issues, Sir, that should be dealt with in that particular time.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Do not mislead Parliament.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- You have misled Parliament many times.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You've misled Parliament all the time.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- He has talked about intellectual honesty and dishonesty.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, make your contribution, do not carry out a conversation with the Honourable Minister for Economy. Stick to what is on the agenda, you have the floor.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Very well, Sir. I was responding to the Honourable Attorney-General, Sir, in terms of intellectual dishonesty many times in this House. He has even pointed to a bullet on the ceiling, saying it was done in the 1987 Coup, and it is not true.

(Laughter)

He does not have any evidence to provide to this House and also that he is unprepared.

HON. SPEAKER.- Stick to the agenda.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- On the issue of misleading this House, Sir, but again, I will remind the Honourable Minister for Defence, you know what the Government is currently facing, they are facing a strategic paralysis.

(Laughter)

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Strategic paralysis, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Talk about your own party.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Again, Sir, even that we come to support the changes that we have and also the days that have been reduced, that allows a proper debate time, and this is the only House where issues will be discussed and debated upon and Committees, as we all know, is just what the



Government wants and what you, Sir, will pass to the Committee, to further find or just to make a report on and report back to Parliament.

Once the Committee deliberates, the House will only debate and take note, there is no vote taken, but again if you look at the days and the hours in the Calendar, it comes down to 2.28 hours per day, Sir. If you look at the 35, 10 days by 80 by 8 hours and plus that 35 days by two, that is the total time that will be spent from the number of weeks that we have there in the Calendar, and our effectiveness on how we, as a Parliament, be very productive and playing our role in raising issues that will be urgent to our people. I think given that we support, we have reservation but again, Sir, I call upon the Government to be more responsible in their every decision every time before they make any changes which will affect Parliamentary representation and our Parliamentary democracy. Thank you, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Ratu Filipe Tuisawau, you have the floor.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Just contributing to the motion and also trying to seek a way forward, I would like to take the stance that I am not a Member of Parliament at this point in time, so based on my work experience when I came in, I looked at the whole structure of Parliament and also looking at some of the systems, practices and efficiencies within. So it is a good opportunity now just to share my thoughts.

The way I am looking at it, it is the whole, may be Parliament, the Standing Orders, the structures, that might need an independent review, and when I am talking about an “independent review”, I am thinking of an independent body because at times, when we are discussing things within Parliament, the political element comes in. So this is just a thought and I do not know whether it will happen or not but I am just sharing it today.

We could look at an independent review of the Parliament processes and procedures, including the Standing Orders, with the assistance of the International Parliamentary Union or Commonwealth Parliamentary Union, so I was just looking at sort of a rough terms of reference on the reviewing of the Standing Orders, the efficiency and effectiveness, the constraints of the Budget, and importantly, as we learn from the induction processes, some of the Parliaments internationally like Australia or New Zealand shared their best practices, in terms of what we discuss, question time, et cetera, and also understanding what Government is saying.

Their role in terms of the time taken for their duties as Ministers and Assistant Ministers, what would be the best balance between that and their role as Parliamentarians. But, of course, noting from the Opposition side, that we need to air the concerns of our constituents in this august House. From that review, we could have recommendations which could cover a lot of the concerns from this side of the House and, of course, from that side. So I am just contributing to the debate today, thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. The Honourable Minister for Health, you have the floor.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker, and I wish to humbly participate in the debate. I speak in support of the motion and am very grateful that we have, sort of, agreed on both sides of the House on the new calendar that is in place.

I just want to reiterate to my learned colleague, Honourable Bulitavu, that the Ministers' statements and responses have been thoroughly investigated and researched, and thoroughly made

by the Ministries and our Officials, that it is a representation of the hard work being done on the ground and also the systems that are in place to be able to respond to the questions made by the Honourable Members. That is just my small contribution, Sir, just to reiterate to my learned friend through your Chair, Sir, that the statements of the Ministers and the responses are those that come from the Ministry and the observations that have been made and the plans that we have in place to ensure that our people, the people of Fiji are given a better service and continue to be given a better service than that we have put in place. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament for his right of reply. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I will be very brief.

We are listening but let me reiterate, Honourable Speaker, Sir, that this is not only from the Government side. We also have to seriously consider the support elements to this as well, particularly from the Secretariat.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, we also have a limited number of Hansard Reporters, et cetera. Likewise, the number of Committee Rooms, so it is not only about Government trying to decrease, it is about the facilities, the logistics support, Honourable Speaker, and budget as well.

The triple constraints of project management, if you want to increase time, it will involve the cost. If you want to increase the scope of activities, it also will increase the cost, so these are the things that we need to factor in as we come to informed decisions when we want to change plans. How much of process was put into this?

Of course, there was a lot of thinking behind the initial Calendar but this is not a divine plan, Honourable Speaker, Sir. This plan is made by men and can be changed by men. There is no such thing as a perfect plan, but a plan is better than no plan at all, and no plan survives, you know that very well, and it is subject to change and we change it when there is a need. And there is a need, those needs have been identified and we have deliberated on this.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, as I have said, better than nothing. But, at least, we need to change it because of the circumstances that have been highlighted, Honourable Speaker. Again, it is not only about coming here and that the legislation is the primary function of this august House. But it is not only that, we have to visit the communities, we have to visit the electorates and, of course, they are worried because we want to follow them to Suvavou and we want to record a few discs as well.

Seriously, Honourable Speaker, Sir, there is work also in the Ministries and we need to be there to guide the work and this, again, is very, very important for us.

(Chorus of interjections)

We need a lot of work. Again, Committees need to scrutinise and deliberate. Most of the work will be undertaken by the Committees.

When we wanted to debate those issues quickly, under Standing Order 51, they have a serious problem with that. What do we do?

There must be an element of flexibility in the House and, of course, as I have stated, Honourable Speaker, Sir, let us prioritise. Again, as I have assured the Honourable Members on the other side who are listening, we are building up to the budget process now and the Budget Address will be in June, and these are the things that Government will look into seriously, together with the Secretariat when we look at the new Calendar year, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

I think I have said much, but I do commend this motion before the House. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I thank the Minister for his Right of Reply.

Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

The Question is:

That Parliament Adopts the Amended Sitting Calendar for 2019 for April to November.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of “Ayes” and “Noes”)

HON. SPEAKER.- There being opposition, Parliament will now vote.

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	44
Noes	:	2
Not Voted	:	5

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the motion is therefore agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Honourable Members, before we carry on to the next agenda item, I would just like to reflect you on what the Leader of the Government in Parliament said in his Right of Reply, “Made by men, and can be changed by men.”

It reminds me of a story of when there was a very bad flood in Ba, in fact one of the biggest floods in Ba that time. The old radio station sent a European announcer to Ba to go and look at and report on the flood. He was touring Ba Town interviewing people, when they said to him, “no you go and ask Mr. Singh, he is the oldest resident here. Go and ask him about the flood”. So he went to Mr. Singh, and he said, “Mr. Singh, what do you think about this flood?”, and Mr. Singh said, “Sir, the rain is come and come and come, and the water is go up and up and up. If it is made by man, man can stop it, but if it is made by God, who can stop it, *bhatao?*”

(Laughter)

We will move on to the next agenda item.

**ADJOURNMENT**

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

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

That Parliament adjourns until Monday, 1st April, 2019 at 9.30 a.m.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote on the motion.

The Question is:

That Parliament adjourns until Monday, 1st April, 2019 at 9.30 a.m.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Noes')

HON. SPEAKER.- Since no Member opposes the motion, it is therefore agreed to unanimously.

Honourable Members, at this juncture I sincerely thank you all for your participation and contributions during this session of Parliament. Honourable Members, it is all right for you, you can go walking in and out of Parliament willy-nilly, but when there is an extended session, the Speaker and the Constable are the only two who cannot move from here and this causes problems.

(Laughter)

And it is highlighted by the motion that was brought up earlier by Honourable Viliame Gavoka that indeed there are water woes.

(Laughter)

Honourable Members, I now declare Parliament adjourned until Monday, 1st April, 2019 at 9.30 a.m. Thank you very much, Honourable Members.

Parliament is adjourned.

The Parliament adjourned at 1.42 p.m.