

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

TUESDAY, 14TH MAY, 2019

[CORRECTED COPY]

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TUESDAY, 14TH MAY, 2019

The Parliament met at 9.34 a.m., pursuant to notice.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present except the Honourable L.S. Qereqeretabua.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 13th May, 2019, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, I beg to 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 Monday, 13th May, 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.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members to today's sitting.

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

It is encouraging to have students visit the Parliament and in this regard, I welcome the students and teachers from Dudley High School. Welcome to Parliament and thank you for taking an interest in your Parliament. I trust that your visit today will be productive and educational, you are most welcome.

SDGs – Guidance Note for the Standing Committees

Honourable Members for your information, there will be a launch of the Oversight of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: Guidance Note for the Standing Committees of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji. I invite all Honourable Members to join me at this launch which will be held during the refreshment break.

Commemoration – 140th Anniversary of the Arrival of First Indentured Labourers

Honourable Members, today marks a very special day in the history of this country. It is the day we celebrate and reminisce the arrival of the first indentured labourers to Fiji and the important contributions, foresight, strength, perseverance that they endured and the unity which has contributed immensely to the development of this country.

I am aware that the celebrations to commemorate the 140th Anniversary has already commenced last week at the Albert Park here in Suva, launched by the Honourable Prime Minister, and also in Lautoka. Today, as I speak, celebrations will also take place in Nausori at the Vunimono Sanatan Hall, and in the North at the Labasa Civic Centre, organised by the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts.

The Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts have also put on a display of the same at the Parliament Foyer, and I encourage Members to visit the Foyer, as well as the visitors who are here today.

Receipt of Written Questions

I would like to inform Honourable Members that the Secretariat has received responses to Written Question Nos. 37/2019 and 38/2019 asked by the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua and Honourable Simione Rasova. These have been conveyed accordingly and will also be uploaded on the Parliament website.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Petition - Granting of State Land to Yavusa Tovatova

Honourable Members, the Ruling on the petition raised by the Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

For the information of Honourable Members, on 10th May, 2019, I received a petition from the Honourable Aseri Radrodro seeking Parliament to allow the Honourable Minister for Lands to grant State land to Yavusa Tovatova in Vatukoula for their resettlement. I will now give my Ruling in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Honourable Members, this petition is clearly an attempt to get Parliament to take action that is not within the power of Parliament to take. As such, this petition cannot be allowed under Standing Order 37(2)(b).

Honourable Members, I have ruled on a number of occasions in the past and I once again reiterate that this Parliament must always uphold and respect the Constitution, separation of powers between the three arms of the State, the:

1. Judiciary;
2. Legislature; and

3. Executive.

It is not for Parliament to direct the exercise of the Executive Authority when a written law expressly gives the authority and discretion to the Executive (whether a Minister or a public officer), to make decisions on any such law. Any challenge to any Executive action or omission may be judicially reviewed in a Court of Law.

I note that this petition seeks to get Parliament to make resolutions for the Minister for Lands to grant State land to a landowning unit. However, the State Lands Act 1945 and the Regulations made thereunder expressly set out the procedures for the grant of State land to any person or entity. These procedures are established by law and it is incumbent upon Parliament to ensure that these well-established legal processes are upheld and not undermined. By law, such decisions cannot be made by Parliament, which is what the petition is seeking from Parliament.

Honourable Members, the use of petitions for such a purpose is wholly improper and it ignores the fact that by written law, Parliament has given the authority to the Executive, whether a Minister or a public officer, to make the decision. As such, the matters raised in the petition should be raised with the Minister for Lands or with the Ministry of Lands.

I note that the petitioners have already written to the Minister for Lands on 23rd April, 2019 on exactly the same issue. It will be for the Minister for Lands and his Ministry to consider and deal with the written request in accordance with established laws, procedures and policies. Of course, Members of Parliament may question Government Ministers in Parliament about decisions made by them or by their Ministries. However, no Member is permitted to abuse Parliamentary procedure to arrogate to Parliament those powers which are conferred on the Executive by law.

Honourable Members, I wish to emphasise once again that this Parliament must always uphold and respect the Constitutional separation of powers between the three Arms of the State. Parliament must not usurp the authority of the Executive and the procedures and the authority that are provided under written law. The use of petitions for such a purpose is fundamentally and legally flawed. I therefore rule that this petition is out of order and will not be tabled in Parliament.

Honourable Members we will move on to the next Agenda Item.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, the Honourable Alvick Maharaj to present the Committee's report. You have the floor, Sir.

Review Report of the Fijian Electoral Commission Annual Report 2014 – Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights in the last term of Parliament was referred the Fijian Electoral Commission Annual Report 2014. The same Report had been re-instated in this new Parliament and has been referred to the current Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights. Just as the previous Committee, the current Committee was mandated by Parliament to review the Report and report back to Parliament on its findings.

The Committee took note of and deliberated on the previous Committee's extensive deliberation and noted its content. The Committee also took note received, to ensure that all possible

points of views and suggestions received were given relevant consideration. It also noted that the previous Committee independently formed its own views and stance on the issues noted in the Fijian Electoral Commission Annual Report 2014.

In its pursuit to form an independent view and stance, the previous Committee addressed all issues noted in the Annual Report and came up with its own recommendations to some of the main issues.

My Committee also shares the view of the previous Committee, in that, some of the suggestions made are either impractical or have already been addressed in some way or the other, since the initial tabling of the Annual Report in Parliament in 2016. For example, the suggestion for a ballot paper to have candidate pictures, party symbols and names would be impractical as this would see a ballot paper the size of a workstation desk. Such an issue has been dealt with in a more practical way and so have most of the issues noted in the 2014 Report.

This Report reiterates the previous Committee's findings and recommendations to the issues noted from the content of the Fijian Electoral Commission Annual Report. This Report is divided into three main parts which are as follows:

- Introduction;
- Committee's observation and findings; and
- Recommendations.

Some of the main areas of discussion addressed in this Report are as follows:

- The realisation of independence of Fijian Electoral Commission by having and controlling its own budget, being able to utilise independent legal services and having clear demarcation on the governance structure of Fiji's electoral management body; and
- Addressing of issues noted in the Fijian Electoral Commission Annual Report with reference to the Multinational Observer Group Report on the 2014 Election and the consideration given to the proposed recommendations to address these issues.

There was also a comparative analysis of various foreign jurisdictions conducted to see the electoral practices of their electoral management bodies. With that, I wish to advise caution in terms of the results of the comparative analysis, that is, that there is no perfect model or right practice for electoral management bodies. The result was used as a mere guidance for the Committee in making its own independent view of what is best for Fiji's circumstance.

At this juncture, I would like to acknowledge the Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights of the last term of Parliament for their efforts and input, which has greatly assisted our Committee in the compilation of this Report.

I would also like to thank the Honourable Members of the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee: Honourable Rohit Sharma (Deputy Chairperson); Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua; Honourable Dr. Salik Govind; and Honourable Mosese Bilitavu, for their deliberations and input; and the Alternate Members who made themselves available when the Substantive Members could not attend. I also thank the Secretariat, the voters, elected politicians and representatives of Fiji's electoral management bodies, who accepted the invitation of the previous Committee and made themselves available to make submissions, and for taking an interest in the proceedings of the Committee and Parliament.

I, on behalf of the Committee, commend the Committee's Report on the Fijian Electoral Commission Annual Report 2014 to Parliament and seek the support of all the Members of this august House for the recommendations by the Committee. Thank you.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

A motion without notice that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Mr. Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote.

The Question is:

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

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of "Noes")

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

Honourable Members, I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, the Honourable Vijay Nath, to present the Committee's Report. You have the floor, Sir.

Annual Review Report of the Fiji Meat Industry Board - 2014 Annual Report –
Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

HON. V. NATH.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The Fiji Meat Industry Board (FMIB) is mandated to protect and preserve the Meat Industry in Fiji with the core function to construct and operate public slaughtering facilities so that people in Fiji get safe and hygienic meat for consumption. FMIB practices humane slaughtering in compliance with the Animal Welfare Act with the use of captive bolt stunning for ruminants and electrical stunning for pigs.

The year 2014 was a challenging year for the industry with poor supply of livestock being a major contributing factor towards FMIB's struggles. The Committee in its recommendations stresses the importance of all relevant stakeholders working together to increase production capacity.

While hearing submissions from stakeholders, the Committee was made aware of the need to review the Meat Industry Act and recommends that this process be carried out at the soonest.

I would like to thank our Committee Members who were part of the team that produced this Report: Deputy Chairperson, Honourable Veena Bhatnagar; Honourable George Vegnathan; Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau; and Honourable Inosi Kuridrani. I also take this opportunity to

acknowledge and thank the Parliamentary Staff - Ms. Priya Chand, Ms. Lia Korodrau and Ms. Komal Khushboo, who have given us invaluable support.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I commend the Review Report of the Fiji Meat Industry Board 2014 Annual Report to Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move:

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR.- Honourable Speaker Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote.

The Question is:

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

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

I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, the Honourable Alvick Maharaj to present the Committee's Report.

Review Report on the Office of the Prime Minister 2015 Annual Report –
Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, the Office of the Prime Minister is primarily responsible for providing sound policy, administrative and technical support to the Head of Government, the Honourable Prime Minister. It also engages with international and regional development partners, civil society organisations and the private sector.

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights in the last term of Parliament was referred the Office of the Prime Minister 2015 Annual Report. The same Report had been reinstated in this new Parliament and has been referred to the current Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights. Just as the previous Committee, the current Committee was mandated by Parliament to review this Report and report back to Parliament on its findings.

Gathering from the 2015 Annual Report of the Office of the Prime Minister 2015, it had numerous highlights; from being responsible for providing support services to the Honourable Prime

Minister in his first year in that role in a democratically elected Government, to various contributions to the governance, economic and socio cultural sectors.

In reviewing the Office of the Prime Minister 2015 Annual Report, the Committee noted that one of the key achievements was on its accountability framework, which according to the Office of the Prime Minister's 2015 Annual Corporate Plan includes facilitation in decision making, support for civil society and improved cooperation with international and regional agencies, and client complaint investigation.

The Committee noted the previous Committee's deliberation, which highlighted a few pertinent issues which the previous Committee discussed extensively with the Office of the Prime Minister and is covered in this Committee Report. These pertinent issues include:

- The forms of complaints received by the Ministry;
- The details and status of the Vatukoula Social Assistance Trust Fund; and
- Clarification on certain perceived financial anomalies.

The Committee was also mindful of the requirements of the Standing Orders of Parliament with respect to the principles of gender equality. Therefore, as part of the discussion with the Office of the Prime Minister, it was encouraging to note how the principle of gender equality was reflected in the Ministry, beginning with one of the vital parts of an institution; the human resource.

This Committee Report will also provide certain recommendations that the Committee has put forth for consideration by the Office of the Prime Minister.

At this juncture I would like to acknowledge the Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights of the last term of Parliament for their efforts and input which has greatly assisted our Committee in the compilation of this Report.

I would also like to thank the Honourable Members of the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee: Honourable Rohit Sharma (Deputy Chairperson); Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua; Honourable Dr. Salik Govind; and Honourable Mosese Bilitavu, for their deliberations and input; the Alternate Members, who made themselves available when the Substantive Members could not attend; the staff and officers of the secretariat and representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister for their cooperation, who assisted the Committee in its work.

I, on behalf of the Committee, commend the Office of the Prime Minister 2015 Annual Report to the Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Honourable Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

The Question is:

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

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

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

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the Honourable Alvick Maharaj, to present the Committee’s Report. You have the floor, Sir.

Review Report – Audit Report for State-Owned Entities and State-Owned Authorities 2015 –
Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. At the outset, I am pleased to present the Review Report on the Audit Report for State-Owned Entities and State-Owned Authorities for 2015.

Majority of this Report has been contributed by the previous Standing Committee on Public Accounts and reviewed and endorsed by the current Public Accounts Committee. This is my fourth Report as Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji’s authority pursuant to Standing Orders 110(1)(c) and as directed by the Speaker of the House for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to examine and thereafter submit its findings on the Office of Auditor-General’s 2015 Annual Report, to Parliament. This Report was thoroughly examined by the present Committee in accordance with the directive by the Speaker of the House on Wednesday, 13th February, 2019.

The Public Enterprises Act 1996, the Financial Management Act 2004 and the Financial Management (Amendment) Act 2016, established the financial accountability framework and legislative timeframe to complete the financial statements for the State-Owned Entities. It was noted that in the Office of the Auditor-General’s Audit Opinion for 2015, financial statements for the State-Owned Entities that were audited had issued 23 unmodified opinions, five modified opinions and one disclaimer of opinion.

I wish to extend my appreciation to all Honourable Members of the Committee who were part of the successful review and compilation of this bipartisan Report, namely; Honourable Joseph Nitya Nand, Honourable Vijendra Prakash, Honourable Aseri Radrodro and Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu.

The Committee also wishes to acknowledge the members of the previous Public Accounts Committee for their tremendous effort. On behalf of the Committee, I also extend my appreciation to the Secretariat staff for their dedication and commitment towards the Review.

I now commend this Report to Parliament. Thank you.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, pursuant to the Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move:

A motion without notice that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. J.N. NAND.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

The Question is:

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

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

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

Honourable Members, I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Public Accounts, the Honourable Alvick Maharaj, to present the Committee’s Report. You have the floor, Sir.

Review Report - Consolidated Volumes 1- 4 Audit Reports and
Supplementary to Audit Report – Standing Committee on Public Accounts

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to present the Review Report on the Consolidated Volumes 1 to 4 Audit Reports and the Supplementary to the Audit Report on the Whole of Government Financial Statement and Annual Appropriation Statement. This Audit Report is for a period of seventh months from 1st January, 2016 to 31st July, 2016.

This Report has been majority contributed by the previous Public Accounts Committee and reviewed and endorsed by the current Public Accounts Committee. This is my fifth Report consisting of four Volumes as the Chairperson of this Standing Committee on Public Accounts and a Supplementary to the Audit Report on the Whole of Government Financial Statements.

The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji’s authority pursuant to Standing Order 110(1)(c) and as directed by the Speaker of the House for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to examine and thereafter submit its findings on the Office of the Auditor-General 2015 Annual Report, to Parliament.

This Report was thoroughly examined by the present Committee in accordance with the directive of the Honourable Speaker of Parliament on Wednesday, 13th February, 2019. It is important to note that this Public Accounts Committee Report consolidated the four Volumes which include:

- Volume 1 which covers the Audit Report on the Accounts and Finances of Government;
- Volume 2 covers the Audit Report on the General Administration Sector;
- Volume 3 covers the Audit Report on Social Service Sector;
- Volume 4 covers the Audit Report on Economic Services and Infrastructure Sector; and
- Supplementary Report for these four Volumes.

I wish to extend my appreciation to all Honourable Members of the Committee who were part of the successful compilation of the bipartisan Report, namely; Honourable Joseph Nitya Nand; Honourable Vijendra Prakash; Honourable Aseri Radrodro; and Honourable Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu.

The Committee also wishes to acknowledge Honourable Members of the previous Public Accounts Committee for their tremendous effort.

On behalf of the Committee, I extend my appreciation to the Secretariat Staff for their dedication and commitment towards the review.

I commend this Report to Parliament. Thank you.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, pursuant to the Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move:

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

HON. J.N. NAND.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote.

The Question is:

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

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of “Noes”)

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

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, Honourable Alexander O'Connor. You have the floor, Sir.

Report on the UN Convention on International Settlement Agreements
Resulting from Mediation – Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Report of the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation. The

Convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly by Resolution 73/198 on 20th December, 2018.

The purpose of the review was to scrutinise the United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation, herein referred to as the “Convention”. Parliament had referred the above Convention to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence at its sitting on 2nd April, 2019.

The Committee when reviewing the treaty heard oral submissions and received written submissions from the:

- Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations;
- Republic of Fiji Military Forces;
- Fiji Revenue and Customs Service;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Ministry of Defence and National Security;
- Office of the Solicitor-General;
- Fiji Police Force;
- Singapore Senior Legal Counsel and Mediator, Mr. George Lim;
- Office of the Commissioner Northern Division;
- Fiji Mediation Centre;
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (written submission);
- International Committee of the Red Cross (written submission);
- Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism; and
- Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission.

The Committee also extended invitations to the following offices and organisations but they were unable to make submissions to the Committee for various reasons:

- Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre;
- Fiji Trades Union Congress;
- Fiji Public Service Association;
- Pacific Conference of Churches;
- Media Industry Development Authority;
- Department of Immigration; and
- Office of the Commissioner Western Division.

Despite the public announcements and advertisements of the Committee’s public consultations, there were minimal contributions from members of the public in all regions visited.

The Committee commends the contributions by stakeholders that assisted in the preparation of this Report. A special mention of Mr. George Lim, Senior Legal Counsel and Mediator from Singapore, who travelled to Fiji at his own expense to make a submission to the Committee.

All the submitters unanimously agreed that Fiji should sign the Convention scheduled in Singapore on the 7th August, 2019 and also fully ratify it. The feedback from the submitters are contained in the Appendices of this Report. The Committee also agrees that Fiji should fully ratify this Convention.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of my Committee as well as the Secretariat staff for compiling this bipartisan Report. On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I submit this Report to the Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, the Honourable Alexander O'Connor. You have the floor, Sir.

Report on the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families – Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Review Report on the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

The purpose of the review was to scrutinise the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, hereinafter referred to as the, 'Convention.' Parliament had referred the above Convention to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence at its sitting on 4th April, 2019.

The Committee when reviewing the Convention heard oral submissions and received written submissions from:

- Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations;
- Republic of Fiji Military Forces;
- Fiji Revenue and Customs Service;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Ministry of Defence and National Security;
- Office of the Solicitor-General;
- Fiji Police Force;
- United Nations Office for the High Commissioner on Human Rights;
- Office of the Commissioner Northern Division;
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (written submission only);
- International Committee of the Red Cross (written submission only); and
- Fiji Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Commission (written submission only).

The Committee also extended invitations to the following offices and organizations but they were unable to make submissions to the Committee for various reasons that is:

- Fiji Women's Crisis Centre;
- Fiji Trades Union Congress;
- Fiji Public Service Association;
- Pacific Conference of Churches;
- Fiji Media Industry Association;
- Department of Immigration;
- Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism; and
- Office of the Commissioner Western Division.

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families is an International Human Rights Treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly for the rights of all migrant workers and protection of their families. The Convention was adopted on 18th December 1990 and came into force in 2003. As of 6th March 2019, the Convention has 54 States Parties. The Convention constitutes a comprehensive international treaty regarding the protection of the rights of workers. It emphasises the connection between migration and human rights, sets a moral standard, and serves as a guide and stimulus for the promotion of migrant rights in each country.

The primary objective of the Convention is to foster respect for migrants' human rights. The Convention does not create new rights for migrants but aims at guaranteeing equality of treatment, and the same working conditions, including in case of temporary work, for migrants and national workers. It also proposes that actions be taken against traffickers and employers of undocumented migrants.

It is prudent to note that in 2010, the Fijian Government in its Universal Periodic Review Report made a commitment towards ratifying all core Human Rights Instruments within the next 10 years. At the last reporting cycle of 2014 in Geneva, before the Human Rights Council, the Fijian Government reaffirmed its commitment to ratifying all core Human Rights Instruments which the Convention is a part of. Fiji has ratified seven of the nine core United Nations Human Rights Treaties.

The Honourable Prime Minister, Voreqe Bainimarama, in an address to the UN General Assembly in New York in February this year has affirmed Fiji's commitment to ratifying the nine core Human Rights Treaties.

The majority of the submitters support the full ratification of the Convention, despite reservations from the Office of the Solicitor-General, FRCS, Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations, Ministry of Defence and National Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and RFMF which are embodied at Appendix A.

The Committee agrees that Fiji should fully ratify this Convention. Despite the public announcements and advertisements of the Committee's public consultations, there were minimal contributions from members of the public in all regions visited. The Committee commends the contributions by stakeholders that assisted in the preparation of its report.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of my Committee and the secretariat staff for compiling this bipartisan Report. On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I submit this Report to the Parliament. Thank you.

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

(Report handed to Secretary-General)

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

Honourable Members, I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, the Honourable Alexander O'Connor. You have the floor, Sir.

Report on the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance – Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Review Report on the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The purpose of the review was to scrutinise the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance hereinafter referred to as the "Convention". Parliament had referred the above Convention to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence at its sitting on 4th April, 2019.

The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is an international human rights treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20th December, 2006, and came into force on 23rd December, 2010.

The Convention commits States Parties to prevent forced disappearances which is defined under international law as a crime against humanity. As of 31st March, 2019, the Convention has 98 Signatories and 59 State Parties.

The aim of the Convention is to protect all persons from enforced disappearances and hold States Parties accountable for enforced disappearances at an international level. The Convention aims to combat impunity for the crime of enforced disappearance and give credence to the person's right to be free from enforced disappearance and the right of victims to justice and reparation.

It is prudent to note that in 2010, the Fijian Government in its Universal Periodic Review Report made a commitment towards ratifying all nine core Human Rights Instruments within the next 10 years. At the last reporting cycle of 2014 in Geneva, before the Human Rights Council, the Fijian Government reaffirmed its commitment to ratifying all core Human Rights Instruments of which this Convention is a part. Furthermore, the Prime Minister, Honourable Voreqe Bainimarama, in an address to the UN General Assembly in New York in February 2019 repeated Fiji's commitment to ratifying the nine core Human Rights Treaties.

The Committee when reviewing the Convention heard oral submissions and received written submissions from:

- Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations;
- Republic of Fiji Military Forces;
- Fiji Revenue and Customs Services
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- Ministry of Defence and National Security;
- Office of the Solicitor-General;
- Fiji Police Force;
- United Nations Office for the High Commissioner on Human Rights;
- Office of the Commissioner Northern Division;
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (written submission only);
- International Committee of the Red Cross (written submission only); and
- Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission (written submission only).

The Committee also extended invitations to the following offices and organisations but they were unable to make submissions to the Committee for various reasons.

- Fiji Women's Crisis Centre;
- Fiji Trades Union Congress;
- Fiji Public Service Association;
- Pacific Conference of Churches;

- Fiji Media Industry Association;
- Department of Immigration; and
- Office of the Commissioner Western Division;

Fiji has ratified seven of the nine core UN Human Rights Treaties. The majority of submitters to the Committee support the full ratification of the Convention, however, reservations were received from the Solicitor-General's Office and the Office of the Director Public Prosecutions. A summary of these reservations are itemised at Appendix A.

The Committee agrees that Fiji fully ratify the Convention. Despite the public announcements and advertisements of the Committee's public consultations, there were minimal contributions from members of the public in all regions visited.

The Committee commends the contributions by stakeholders that assisted in the preparation of this Report. I take this opportunity to thank Members of my Committee, as well as the Secretariat staff for compiling this bipartisan Report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I submit this Report to the Parliament. Thank you.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

Honourable Members, I have been advised that there are no Ministerial Statements for today and there are also no Bills for Consideration.

Honourable Members, at this juncture, I will adjourn for morning tea. As you are well aware, there will be a function in the Big Committee Room and I would be honoured to do the proceedings there. But we break for morning tea and because of the requirements for this occasion, we will break for 45 minutes. Honourable Members, we are adjourned.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.24. a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.11 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I wish to clarify that with respect to the five Standing Committee Motions listed on today's Order Paper, at the end of each debate, we will be voting merely to note the Report and once the vote is taken, it ends there and the Report will not be debated again in Parliament. You are all familiar with this procedure.

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, the Honourable Vijay Nath, to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

CONSOLIDATED REPORT ON INVESTMENT FIJI 2015 AND 2016 ANNUAL REPORTS

HON. V. NATH.- Honourable Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Consolidated Report on Investment Fiji 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports which was tabled on 15th May, 2018. (*Parliamentary Paper No. 71 of 2018*)

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR.- Honourable Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs to speak on the motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I take this opportunity to speak on the motion in regards to the Consolidated Report of Investment Fiji 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports.

Mr. Speaker Sir, by way of background Investment Fiji initially began in the year 1980 under the Economic Development Board Act to promote, stimulate and facilitate economic development in Fiji. In doing so, Investment Fiji provides a range of services to promote investment and the development of industries and enterprises as well as to increase exports of goods and services.

Mr. Speaker Sir, having deliberated on the Report, the Committee was pleased to note the numerous milestones achieved since 2015 with the overarching "transform to perform" programmes initiated by Investment Fiji. This transformation from being reactive to proactive is achieving the desired results and should be given all the support it needs.

The Committee also noted the concerted efforts taken by Investment Fiji with other key stakeholders to ensure that Fiji is competitive in the global markets. This is through the formation of the working group which comprised of the Office of the Solicitor-General, Ministry of Industry Trade and Tourism, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, Reserve Bank of Fiji, Registrar of Companies and Investment Fiji. The group aimed to review Fiji's global standing with regards to the ease of doing business.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee has made a few recommendations not only to ensure that Investment Fiji facilitated interested investors to obtain Foreign Investment Registration Certificates, but also to ensure that Fiji's national economy continues to grow.

To name a few, the Committee noted that Investment Fiji was keen to expand on its network through the Trade Commission. The Committee, therefore, recommends that such networks are enhanced. The Committee noted the perception by the Department of Immigration in terms of

obtaining work investor permits which sometimes became a stumbling block for interested investors. The Committee strongly suggested that the perception needs to be corrected.

The Committee also recommended that the Department of Immigration requirements should be made known clearly to any inspiring investor. It also noted that there is a need to explore relevant courses in other universities and therefore create a more specialised workforce in Fiji.

To conclude, Investment Fiji has undergone a remarkable transformation since 2015 and the Committee is confident that the initiatives in place will yield the desired results in terms of growing Fiji's economy for the benefit of all Fijians.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with those few comments to enlighten the House as the Member moving the motion, I thank you for this opportunity.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Chairperson of the Standing Committee. Honourable Members the floor is open. Honourable Minister, you may have the floor.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I wish to make a contribution towards the debate before the House. I first wish to thank the Committee for the comprehensive Consolidated Reports for 2015 and 2016.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I think it is imperative to provide some positive comments and support the bipartisan report which has been signed by Members from both sides of the House. The negative comments contributed by my colleagues on the other side of the House must not be allowed to start the deliberation in this honourable House this morning. It must be pushed back to the backbenches. Not only the negativity produced by my colleagues on the other side, it is also the continuous repetitions by their own contributions which they seem to repeat and also the same negative comments repeated amongst themselves.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight four of the findings and recommendations by the Committee.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- That one is hogwash.

(Laughter)

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- You can see Sir where the hogwash is coming from.

Firstly, is the recognition that the Committee has quoted as one of the milestones achieved towards the high impact investment opportunities. Inter-grown into this cluster of investment are the many projects which Investment Fiji uses to attract investors. The Committee recommendations on the range of projects to be expanded and be properly packaged to attract investors into the specific areas of development, is noted.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, secondly, the Committee noted that the Foreign Investment Regulations do not include the retail business competing with the locals, especially the Small Scale enterprises.

The Committee also noted that currently MITT is looking at the Foreign Investment Act of 1999 to develop an investment policy. This Committee details the review and reserves the restriction of activities as part of this process in order to devise an investment policy that is conducive to attracting quality investments.

Thirdly, Honourable Speaker, Sir, the work of the Committee that has been carried out by the working group, which includes the Office of the Solicitor-General, MITT, FRCS, RBF, Registrar of Companies and Investment Fiji, is to review the ease of doing business. One of the Committee's recommendations is that this working group be given necessary support to improve Fiji's standing globally, especially in areas where requirements are duplicated due to excessive regulations.

Lastly, Honourable Speaker, Sir, is Investment Fiji's objective to tap into global value chains. One such example is our ability to provide level one services for basic call-centre operations made possible with our connections of the Southern Cross cable. The Committee also noted that service level two is carried out in Australia and New Zealand and the development of relevant education programmes at our universities that can be performed in Fiji.

The Committee also recommended Investment Fiji to liaise with our universities, to explore the introduction of the relevant courses and thereby create a workforce to do a more specialised activities within the services in Fiji. Honourable Speaker, that is my contribution and I thank you for the opportunity.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you Honourable Minister. Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, you have the floor.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you Honourable Speaker,. I was not planning to speak but when I heard my honourable colleague from the other side, I thought I would say a few words on this Report.

I was actually quite surprised and saddened by the honourable Minister's comment about what the Opposition should do. Honourable Speaker, negativity about a particular issue in terms of raising a particular point is not necessarily a bad thing. We have been told many times from the other side that we must be worthy, and we must support, but in Parliament honourable Speaker, if we do not ask honest question, if we do not raise honest issues, we are actually undermining the confidence that we might give to the investors outside of the country. In fact honourable Speaker, the honourable Member does not seem to understand the role of the Opposition, but someday when he joins the Opposition he might understand what I am saying.

(Laughter).

It is the job of the Opposition honourable Speaker, to raise issues. We do not expect Government Members to talk about the negative things and obviously we understand that they will come, they will belabour their point and they will want to ensure that everything is all right. The UNDP person said in Parliament that it is the role of the Opposition to hold the Executive to account and so I want to plead with my Honourable colleagues on the other side, when we say something, when we make a suggestion, we are not against a particular Ministry or against a particular Minister or against the country. We are saying what we are supposed to say.

So, let me, Honourable Speaker, remind the Honourable Member, that sometimes, you know there is a thing in politics called "cognitive dissonance", when politicians get into a state of cognitive dissonance, they begin to believe everything that they read, do and entertain but they do not believe what is the reality. Sometimes they actually forget the reality.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Honourable Speaker, when they are reminded of the reality, they actually get quite angry about it and feel very aggrieved by it. I want to say to the Honourable Minister ...

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ... to listen to some of the negative comments from this side.

Let me on that note thank the Committee, I think it is a comprehensive Report, Honourable Speaker, and I thank the Committee for the Report.

I just wanted to make a few points and I know the Honourable Minister had a lot of experience with respect to investment and in general the economics of what is going on and what investment boards or bureaus or agencies should do. I know she has talked about the Review of the Foreign Investment Act, I think it is timely, it is a good thing and I support that.

We have always talked about Investment Fiji, Honourable Speaker, becoming a one stop shop, and not this Government, we have had this from previous Governments as well, previous directors and CEO's and Boards of the Fiji Investment Bureau; we had this before. So, it is not just this Government but I do not think we have reached a point where we actually have a one stop shop and I think we need to work towards that.

Let me just give you an example, Honourable Speaker. This is not again negativity but this is all done with the view to improving the processes and the investment environment. I want to talk about Small Medium Enterprises. I had this Small Medium Enterprise potential investor come to me and he already has a company, establishing a company is not a big deal, it is quite easy; you have a name, you go and register a company, that is fine. Once you have registered a company, Honourable Speaker, you want to start a business.

So to operate a business, one would need a bank account, if you have got a business, you have registered it, the next thing you go to the bank and you say, "I want to open a bank account." And you go to a bank and you say, "I want to start a new account" the bank says, "where is your business licences? We need your business licence." So then the person goes to the agency which gives the business licence and the agency then says, "to get a business licence, we need a Tax Compliance Certificate from you." So he goes to Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) and FRCS says, "For a Tax Compliance Certificate, you need to be already operating your business." It is a vicious cycle, the guy was back to square one.

So these are examples of difficulties that Small Medium Enterprises have in this country even today. I know that the Honourable Minister in the last Ministerial Statement quite rightly actually pointed out that there are bottlenecks and I have heard her speak during Town Council meetings and others where she actually highlighted this issue so this is not something new. The reason why I am pointing this out is to prove a point to the Honourable Minister who spoke earlier that this is not negativity, these are real issues.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- When we talk about the economy let me just make one more small point Honourable Speaker, and I will sit down for the day probably.

When we talk about a particular economic variable, I was quite surprised that the Honourable Minister of Economy talked about how in Congress in the United States of America please do not

talk, their system is different. When they invite the Chairman of the Reserve Bank, the grilling and the kind of questions they ask which is live so the Committees do that. And it is not about the fact that Congress so and so, men or women is against the United States of America or against the Federal Reserve of the United States of America, that is why it is very, very essential so I actually am quite surprised when I hear from the Honourable Minister for Economy and few others to say, “hey, you know you are Opposition”, what do we do here then? We come here and say that everything is good. We come here and just listen the Ministers?

The job of the Opposition in Parliament, Honourable Speaker, is to hold every Minister to account, every Committee to account and that is what we do. Let us not lecture about the role of the Opposition and I do hope, Honourable Speaker, that we do not hear those kind of condescending statements from Ministers from the other side anymore. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Nawaikula, you have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Speaker, I wish to begin by saying that on that side of the House it is full of hogwash; generalisations.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The second problem is that you rely too much on one person, Honourable Attorney-General. He is the expert of education, he is the expert on agriculture, he is expert on fisheries and he is the expert on health; that is the outcome, that is what we hear from this House. So we ask, what are you people doing? Nothing.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And he is the expert in hiding things.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- He says that the economy is growing.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Yes, it is growing.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Fisheries, what is your contribution to the GDP? 1.7, you are not doing your work.

(Laughter)

Forestry, less than 2 percent or zero, you are not doing your work, that is the truth. Agriculture went down, that is the clarity of things and we are only relying on two things.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Just speak on the report.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- We are only relying on two things; tourism and money coming from overseas.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Remittances.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Remittances. FSC - \$400 million in 10 years, that is the status. So you come here with only one person leading the House, and what is everyone doing? Nothing.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- But, back to the Report. This Report, Honourable Speaker, was tabled in Parliament on 15th May, 2018.

HON. V. NATH.- Point of Order.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I initiated and moved that Parliament debates on that Report, not the content and not what the Honourable Member is saying, it is irrelevant. It is not relevant to the Report.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Because he wanted to know the truth about the economy. I will tell you the truth of the economy.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- More than 2,000 unemployed from Fiji Water Authority, 350 from Fulton Hogan, 250 from Fiji Pine Limited, what is all that? And you are saying it is growing?

So this Report, Honourable Speaker, was tabled on 15th May, 2018 and the CEO of Investment Fiji appeared, but the critical thing about Investment Fiji is that, what is it doing? It is doing nothing. We establish this whole thing that it will attract investors and where are they? Yearly, you do not see them. Where is the list of all these investors? A lot of them just come in to obtain their Investment Certificates then they go away.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- One Hundred Sands.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So where are they? Annually we want to know, how much money are they bringing in? Where is One Hundred Sands? Where is Waila City? Where are all these?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Where is Malolo? That is the responsibility...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Exactly. You have to empower. Where is Balaga Pearls?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- There is only one pearl farmer in Fiji, Justin. So what are you doing to the others? What investment are you giving to them?

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is your problem.

(Laughter)

So the Committee noted numerous milestones achieved by Investment Fiji.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Very soon.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Yes, soon. You have been there 13 years, too much, you should get out. We have been waiting too long.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And it says, they have embarked on numerous milestones, what milestone? Nothing, but Fiji continues to regress on the Ease of Doing Business; going down, going down, going down.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Going down where?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And I said, no, you ask the Honourable Premila Kumar, she knows it; the Ease of Doing Business according to her is going down and its ranking on the US State Department Annual Investment Climate Statement, so that is totally bad. Investment Fiji promotes, stimulates and facilitates State investment in Fiji and promotes economic growth in bringing in foreign investors. I am asking her, where are all these foreign investors?

All those that are here, were there before. You did nothing too. The findings of the recommendations of the Standing Committee which is important for everyone here to know is that:

1. The range of projects be expanded and be properly packaged to attract investors into specific areas of development. So clear here. You are not doing that.
2. A detailed review of reserved and restricted activities is to be part of this process in order to devise an investment policy that is conducive to attracting quality investments. Just look around, who are operating our shops? Do we have any locals there? That is where you need to relook at this. Detailed review of reserved and restricted activities so that you also empower us, you do not only attract investors, you also empower the local community.
3. That Investment Fiji should expand its network through Trade Commissions and all this time, it has not been doing that

This is from the report.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- This is from the report. I am just quoting.

4. That the working group be given the necessary support to improve Fiji's standing globally especially in areas where the requirements are duplicated due to excessive regulations. And also that Investment Fiji liaise with our universities to explore the introduction of the relevant courses and thereby create the workforce to do more specialised Level 2 and Level 3 services in Fiji.

The key issue or the important point to say here, Honourable Speaker, Sir, Investment Fiji has failed to ensure that the rules on reserve and that they stick to the activities are adhered to. Most of the restricted and reserved activities such as restaurants, corner shops, hairdressing, basic construction activities amongst others are now operated by foreigners. You want me to repeat that. Let me repeat that. Most of the restricted and reserved activities such as restaurants, corner shops, hairdressing, basic construction activities amongst others are now operated by foreigners.

The cost of doing business in Fiji is still high and Fiji's ranking is still declining. There is also lack of monitoring and evaluation by Investment Fiji on the implementation of investments after registration. Certificates issued does not guarantee the actual investment on the ground. There must be a clear guideline and timeline for the issuance of certificates.

Some investors use their certificates to mobilise financial resources from elsewhere. So, in a nutshell, this is an organisation that is not doing what it is supposed to do. The responsibility that we gave it in, there is a lot of need for improvement there and that is a very bad sign of bad management on the side of Government.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi, you have the floor.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I rise to contribute to the debate on the Consolidated Report on Investment Fiji 2015 and 2016. First I would like to thank the Chairperson and the Members of the Committee for their findings and recommendations in their Report. I wish to comment very briefly on Item No. 4 in regards to the role of Investment Fiji which it plays in facilitating, assisting investors to obtain foreign investment registration certificates.

There has been a number of breaches recently on the laws of this country, Fiji, and also includes adherence to our environment laws, Sir. My comment is that, I would like to encourage Investment Fiji to remain vigilant and continue to perform rigorous vetting on foreign companies that wish to invest in Fiji.

We need to clearly understand their background. What sort of operations that they have performed in other countries so that Fiji does not receive negative performance by these companies and, in particular, I speak on the companies that have breached the laws and caused havoc, enormous damages to our environment and, of course, the livelihood of the traditional *qoliqoli* owners, who own the *qoliqoli* which have been spoiled, damaged by some of these companies.

So, Sir, that is my contribution, and I would like to make the recommendation that Investment Fiji must remain vigilant and continue to rigorously perform assessments, whether it be the initial assessment or due diligence at some time or other before they are allowed to operate, to invest in Fiji so that the people of Fiji can protect their resources, in particular, the *qoliqoli* owners. *Vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Viliame Gavoka, you have the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Let me just say, at the outset, something also in regards to what my colleague, the Minister from the other side said about us being

negative. I just want to go back to what you said today, Honourable Speaker, about a special day, that is today commemorating the arrival of the *Girmitiyas* at that time.

It is indeed a special day, a day that we should treasure. But we are just playing our act, playing our role as Opposition, can we just ask the other side, what happened to the allocation that you passed through here to build a museum or some structure for the *Girmitiyas*? Where is it, so where is it? I mean it is a case, Honourable Speaker, of over-promise, less delivery, poor delivery.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Last year, our Honourable Member (Honourable Professor Biman Prasad) moved the motion to set up a bipartisan committee to celebrate this occasion but was shot down by the FijiFirst. So, when you say that we are negative, we are very, very, positive and it is always the case with them to defend their failed policies in the way they run the executive affairs of this country. So I would like to remind them of that, that we play a role here and that they are failing very badly in some very key areas. We would like to see the structure that you promised for the *Girmitiyas* to start, not another promise that will be explained away in a few years' time, a few years down the line. Thank you.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, we now have a concern in this country that some areas that were always restricted for locals, are now being opened to everyone in the country, and if you look at our recommendation that we really need to relook at the Foreign Investment Act that perhaps some of these should be restricted. But maybe I am wrong in saying that, Honourable Speaker, because the make-up of Fiji now has changed quite dramatically.

Let me take us back to the Census that we had in 2017 showing the growth in population during the ten years between 2007 and 2017. What it shows, Honourable Speaker, is that the iTaukei community totalled 475,735 in 2007; by 2017, it is down to 460,141. The Indo-Fijian community was 313,798 in 2007, down to 309,711 in 2017. Others, Honourable Speaker, was 47,734 in 2007, now 115,035 in 2017.

They have grown, Honourable Speaker, so significantly and I have no problems with that. It is the way our country is going but the specific segments in our community has grown dramatically, compared to the, let me say, traditional segment in this country, the iTaukei and the Indo-Fijians. The population statistics can be captured in the following table.

Population (Census) Statistics in 10 Years (From 2007 to 2017)

	2007	2017
iTaukei	475,735	460,141
Indo-Fijians	313,798	309,711
Others	47,734	115,035

This is the sector now that perhaps is creating, I should say, the anomalies today that a lot of us who consider ourselves “locals” are saying that we are being denied of opportunities because it has been given to others. I am a very inclusive person, if these Others are now part of us, let us take them and embrace them as part of us, but I think it is significant that we realise this, that a particular segment of the community has increased dramatically over the last 10 years, and when you make policies now, we must factor that into the way we plan for the future.

As my colleague had said, in the past, there were cafes, restaurants, hairdressers, small construction companies that were reserved for locals, but it is now free-for-all and this could be impacting on the landscape of businesses in this country.

Honourable Speaker, on another issue for the ease of doing business, I continue to be inundated with complaints from business people saying that it has never been difficult, it has never been hard like today running a business in Fiji. I know most of it is anecdotal that you would like to maybe carry out some empirical survey into this but right now, I am sure there is truth in what they say, it is now very difficult to do business in Fiji and we have lost our standing in the global community in this area.

I am a Member of the Economic Affairs Committee that scrutinises this Report and I was pleased that a working group was working towards this, and I would like to have a Report on how we are doing, Honourable Minister. How are the people in Tourism Fiji, MITT, FRCS, RBF and Investment Fiji doing in making things easier to carry out businesses in Fiji?

Those, Honourable Speaker, are some key observations that I would like to make and it behoves us to focus on this because we cannot make head or tail with this claim by FijiFirst that they have grown the economy for eight years or nine years consecutively because if we know the private sector concerns of the growth, it is only 7 percent. As my Honourable colleague has said, Fisheries is only 1.7 percent or 2 percent.

The Honourable Minister for Forest was saying two weeks ago that Forest has not grown at all in terms of its contribution to the economy, so where is it coming from? It is coming from public spending and public spending will not last forever. The day of reckoning is coming and this country....

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Another economist.

(Laughter)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I am not an economist but I am a businessman. I have ran some very successful companies, businesses, and I believe I do know how to have control over resources. I think we are also over-relying too much on some of these Economists who have never run a business before. It is good to be an academic but you have got to know how to run a business and be part of the real world.

Honourable Speaker, Investment Fiji is indeed a very good organisation. The gentleman who used to run it, I believe, has returned to his home in New Zealand but there are many issues that need to be addressed, and I think it takes the policy of Government to ensure that a body like this delivers on its roles. Those are my observations, Honourable Speaker, thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Lynda Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I will not be very long. I just like to make a point to add to what my colleagues have mentioned as we know we have an issue of liquidity in our country right now

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Yes, Honourable Speaker, Sir, the Ministers themselves know they have been limited in their expenditure per day to \$30,000 which is unprecedented. They have now

been cutting down at their expenses and there is an issue of liquidity. I think they just need to come out and admit it but anyway, in order to help with our liquidity issue that we have in our country, Mr. Speaker, Sir, foreign investors are encouraged and that is why the role of Investment Fiji is to bring in investors. It is Economics 101, Honourable Speaker, Sir, it does not take an economist to point out that you need foreign investment to increase liquidity in our country.

Now, Honourable Speaker, Sir, the requirement by Investment Fiji for some industries is the investment of \$1 million minimum to be deposited by the investors before they can begin business in some of the industries. What is happening, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in some of the industries is that, some foreign companies that are coming in are actually not investing the million dollars but they are waiting. Once they secure contracts they wait for the first million dollars that they make from their clients in claims before they qualify and have met the million dollar. The money is not actually coming into the country, Sir, they are making it from usually a local company or clients that are local.

So, where is the foreign investment that is supposed to be coming in which is a million dollars secure in the bank account before business commences. This is happening and the Government and Investment Fiji needs to look at that, that actual money is not coming in directly from these foreign investors, they secure the contracts and they wait for that money to be claimed from their clients who are usually local so the money is coming from within the country.

How does that increase our foreign reserves; how does that increase our investments; and how does that increase liquidity in our country? That is something for Investment Fiji to think about and it is a failure indeed. We are then hurting the small construction businesses as has been mentioned, they are now run by foreigners as well as the hair salons and the restaurants and this is what is happening.

In some industries like construction, a million dollars is very little so they wait for that to come first before they meet that requirement, so Investment Fiji needs to relook at that to ensure that that money is secure and deposited before they can commence business in Fiji. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for this opportunity. I would like to definitely make my contribution to the debate on this particular Report.

The Standing Committee recommendations and findings are noted and as the Minister responsible for investments, I wish to update this House on the progress made on each recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with regards to Recommendation No.1, Investment Fiji has been actively working on developing and renewing sector base profiles. Currently, Investment Fiji has 10 sectors specific profiles for agriculture, fisheries, forestry, health, ICT, manufacturing, tourism, energy, audio visual, mining and ground water. These profiles provide brief analysis of the sectors, the existing opportunities and incentives. In addition, Investment Fiji, has investment ready projects that are shared with potential investors.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in order to address the concerns raised by the Standing Committee on the Protection of Small Scale Retail Businesses, as well as this issue was raised here just a while ago. I wish to highlight that the current Foreign Investment Act reserved and restricted list protects Fijian investors. It does not mean that you see different races operating different shops, they are not locals.

These investors came from the year 1987 and by now they have acquired the citizenship. So how would you know that they are not local investors? Face does not tell you. You need to establish that through the Immigrations Department.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Let me continue, Mr. Speaker, Sir. There are small scale retail businesses such as milk bars, cafeterias, retail, savoury stalls and market to name a few. In order to further strengthen the legal requirements, the Cabinet earlier this year endorsed the Investment Policy Statement. The Policy Statement sets the overall vision and objectives of the Fijian Government. It also provides for protection of the national interest which includes key fundamentals: Impact on:

- national security;
- competition, compliance with Fijian Government policies and laws;
- the Fijian economy and community;
- environment and health;
- character of the investor for State-Owned Enterprises; and
- the commercial orientation of investor is also looked into.

This is a major shift from what was stated in the 1999 Foreign Investment Act. We are modernising our investment law so that it is of international standard. As we all know that our legislation was drawn up in 1999 and obviously the rest of the world has moved on and we have to catch up with them. And by having this national interest, that will definitely protect the country from getting investors who may be involved in money laundering or getting money from other sources.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to protect the growing domestic industries, the revised legislation will have a negative list approach. This will enable the protection of sensitive sectors but at the same time provide value addition and technological growth for specialised industries. For example, the negative list will exempt businesses that competes with small retail outlets, but allow for high end, designer retail outlets to set up businesses. So it does not mean that we should have a category called “no retail business will be allowed to foreign investors.”

What we are saying here is, smaller businesses will be done by the local investors but when it comes to high-end retail outlets, like designer shops, local investors do not have the money to invest in that and this is where we open it up and try and attract investors to come in. Noting that one area that we are promoting is tourism and there are lot more tourists coming to our shores and we would like to give them a much higher end shopping environment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry together with Investment Fiji has been working on enhancing its network especially with the Trade Commissions and other Government agencies. Investment Fiji has dedicated desk officers for each region who work closely with the Trade Commissions and all Fijian Diplomatic Missions. This enables faster flow of information. Investment Fiji’s collaboration with Fijian Diplomatic Mission has led to a network in emerging markets. For example, MOUs have been signed with international investment promotion agencies to enhance collaboration.

In addition, Investment Fiji is collaborating with agencies such as Pacific Trade and Invest, AusTrade on Trade and Investment Missions and seminars. They work closely with the Fijian and foreign business councils such as Fiji- Australia, Fiji-New Zealand, Fiji-USA and Fiji-PNG to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with regards to Recommendation No. 3 on investment facilitation, it is worth noting that immigration authorities across the world have the role of protecting their borders which requires that they undertake the relevant checks.

Obtaining a Foreign Investment Registration Certificate does not make any investor immune from the laws of the country. In fact, Honourable Speaker, Sir, all FRCS does is to register a foreign investor and identify the specific legal requirements that they need to fulfil in order to operate business in Fiji. The requirements to comply with the immigration legislation is clearly made known to the foreign investor.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the working group which was formed during the review period of the Annual Report has been formalised by Cabinet as Ease of Doing Business. The Taskforce is responsible for the implementation of the World Bank Group Regulatory Reform Team recommendations. The recommendations provide some quick ways that when implemented will lead to improvements in their respective doing business processes. The Taskforce is currently working on two important business processes and again it was raised here just a while ago, that is, starting a business and obtaining construction permits.

We have also talked about the various processes that are involved where Micro-Small or Medium Enterprises have to get all these permits to start the business. So what we have done, we are re-designing both, Starting a Business and Construction Permits. That has already been done and the Ministry together with the Singaporean Government are currently working on the harmonisation of forms and this will be launched as “BizFiji Information Portal.” In other words we have done the work in this area, we have looked at the requirements for each and every agency. We have streamlined it, we have got the forms, it will all be available online and we will be launching the BizFiji Information Portal at the end of next month.

I have also heard from the Honourable Member talking about a one stop shop. Now, this has been a dream for all the governments in the past where the idea was to have a one stop shop somewhere within Investment Fiji that could really speed up the approval processes. Unfortunately, it never worked, we know it never did, despite efforts made by the past governments and continuously we have failed on that. But now with the digital platform, it will be much more easier.

What we are doing in that area is, that all the information on the application process will be on the digital platform. There will be a tracking system where the investor can track where he or she is with the approval process and all other approval agencies can also see who is delaying the approval. So it will be just one platform where everyone will have an opportunity to see the progress. The best thing about this portal is that it will also provide easy to understand infographics on the process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with regards to the last recommendation on Fiji’s ability to provide ICT services beyond call centres. It is worth noting that foreign investors have already invested in and are operating data vouchering process, accounting auditing services, tele-housing and warehousing, software development and disaster recovery management. This sector employs approximately 4,000 fulltime employees.

I wish to inform this House that being able to provide ICT services such as business process outsourcing does not require a workforce that is specialised just in IT skills, but one that has knowledge and skills in Commerce, Accounting, Law to name a few. In this regard Fiji has an educated workforce which can provide the relevant skills to the sector.

Now, going back to some of the issues raised by the Honourable Members, I will start off with where one of the Honourable Member had just said that we have to hold Ministers and the Government to account. I agree with that but that can only happen if you come with facts and figures.

So one Honourable Member is saying that we have to hold the Government to account, whereas the other Honourable Member (who is not here), Mr. Speaker, Sir, said that Investment Fiji is doing nothing. He is saying that there are no local investors working and spending their money. I do not know where he lives, probably he just arrived into the country. The only thing he had to do was just type “Investment Fiji” and he would have read all the information there. This is a concern which was raised yesterday, that when you come to this House, you should come with facts and figures and not just make generalised statements and then run away.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Let me also talk about Policy Reform. Policy Reform is a continuous process, it is not like one time you have done it and it should work forever and ever. It does not work that way.

So whenever an issue is identified, Policy Reform processes are put into place like, for example, analysing where the bottlenecks are and addressing those issues, and that is precisely what the Government is doing. Again the Honourable Member talked about and belittled this side of the Members by simply saying that there is only one person who knows everything and the rest of us are just warming the seats.

(Laughter)

Let me tell him, he needs to understand the very basic work of a Minister for Economy. When you say Minister for Economy, the Minister for Economy needs to understand each and every sector of the economy.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- And so if he has this knowledge, what is wrong with it?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- He is no longer a Minister for Finance, maybe that is what you are thinking, get it right. This is Minister for Economy.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Again, I want to correct what the previous Honourable Member spoke about, rather than talking on the Report, sometimes the Honourable Members gullivant and bring in other issues not related to this Report at all. And one example was Honourable Gavoka, I do not know how the *Girmit* Museum is linked to the Investment Fiji Report.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I cannot see the linkage. But let me tell him the *Girmit* Museum's Expression of Interest was out in the papers recently. Again, he ventured out and started talking about the population. I do not understand how that population fits into Investment Fiji Report that we are discussing.

Now regarding Honourable Tabuya, she spoke about investors coming in with money and Investment Fiji should be monitoring this money. Just to get things right, it is not Investment Fiji that monitors, it is Reserve Bank of Fiji that monitors. So get that one right as well.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I am pleased to say that we are working towards this reform and I hope the Honourable Members on the other side will appreciate the work we are doing. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we have covered this motion. I will now give the floor to the Chairman for his Right of Reply. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. V. NATH.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, for your permission.

First of all, I would like to thank the Honourable Members for their contribution especially the Honourable Minister for Fisheries for highlighting, knowing that this is a bipartisan report where Members of the Opposition also sit in in this Committee. At this juncture, I also would like to thank the Honourable Premila Kumar for picking up item by item on our recommendations and explaining to us what is happening where. I thank the Minister for her contribution. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote to note the content of the Report.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of "Noes")

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

Honourable Members, I give the floor to the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, the Honourable Vijay Nath, to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

REVIEW REPORT - PACIFIC FISHING COMPANY LIMITED ANNUAL REPORT 2016

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Review Report on the Pacific Fishing Company Limited (PAFCO) Annual Report 2016, which was tabled on 15th May, 2018.

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs to speak on the motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. V. NATH.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. On behalf of the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I take this opportunity to speak on the motion in regards to the Report on the Pacific Fishing Company Limited (PAFCO) Annual Report 2016.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, by way of introduction, the PAFCO began its operation in the mid to late 1950s as a joint venture between the Fiji Government and Japanese Ministry of Trade & Commerce. It later incorporated into a private company and the Fiji Government acquired almost full ownership in 1987 from the Japanese Company and now holds 99.6 percent of the share with the balance of 0.4 percent held by the current shareholders.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee noted that consistent and sufficient supply of tuna remains to be the challenge of PAFCO. Other challenge includes higher overhead costs, mainly electricity-related, port and handling fees and housing shortage.

In 2016, the Committee noted that adverse effect of natural disasters, namely *TC Winston* and *TC Ula*, have brought a lot of devastation which not only caused delay in the tuna supply but also irreparable damage on a lot of houses, many of which are those of PAFCO employees. The community has not noted that PAFCO operates in a relative tough environment with the local and international competition. In this regard, a number of recommendations have been put forward by the Committee to ensure that PAFCO remains relevant in the market. The Committee encourages PAFCO to research and pursue more viable revenue opportunities that exist with regards to the value-added bi-products such as oil fish, fish meal, fish bone, thereby maximising returns.

To address accommodation shortage faced by PAFCO employees, the Committee recommends that PAFCO reassesses joint venture opportunities for the construction and management of an accommodation development, utilising its surplus land-holding to increase housing capacity in township.

Finally, the Committee noted the high cost of overhead (that is 39 percent of the total expenses), which is largely contributed to the cost of electricity. The Committee understands that Energy Fiji Limited is making strides to provide consistent and affordable electricity to Levuka and will recommend that this issue remains a top priority.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is of utmost importance that PAFCO management continuously review their strategies in order to stay ahead in the field of business.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with those few comments to enlighten the House, as the Member moving the motion, I thank you for this opportunity.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Chair. Any Member wishing to take the floor on this motion? Honourable Vosanibola, you have the floor.

HON. P.W. VOSANIBOLA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I rise to contribute to the debate on the motion before the House.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Committee for the comprehensive Report tabled to this House regarding the Annual Report for PAFCO. PAFCO specialises in canning tuna and has 10 years agreement with Bumble Bee (Foods).

During the period under review, as stated in the Annual Report, bonuses were paid to the workers and there was medical consultation for the people of Ovalau by flying doctors from America, and also the conduct of an anti-corruption measures training by the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the first recommendation in the Report deals with having more business-minded people as members of the Pacific Fishing Company Board which we all support to make the Company economically viable but at the same time, there is a need to have people on the Board, who have the knowledge and experience on labour relations, climate change and its effects on the fishing industry, including research and development.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the second recommendation in the Report discusses enhancing good governance by way of provision of five senior management positions which were funded by Bumble Bee. Bumble Bee, by the way, has vested interest in PAFCO towards productivity. I suggest that the workers' welfare, working environmental condition and care must also be taken into account.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Report makes recommendation to the effect of PAFCO diversifying its products. This is, again, a move that we welcome as it makes, creates jobs, more revenue and arrests the issue of wastage and diversifies the product variety by PAFCO. Well it is almost three years now and we would like to know what action has been taken in this respect to diversify PAFCO products or by-products.

Sir, the Committee also found the paucity of services and space in Levuka as an isolated place and more so by the virtue of being a heritage town to expand its operations, secure the necessary service and supply to operate as it plans, which is also hindered by power supply.

Given the quest for green energy, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think this will partially solve the problem while the Energy Fiji Ltd continues to find medium to long term solutions to the energy issues at PAFCO.

On employment issues, Mr. Speaker, Sir, PAFCO cannot deny that it has been in the spotlight for labour-relation issues for the last one and a half decade. There has been rigorous debates and enquiries into the employment issues. In fact, against the good image that PAFCO is trying to paint about itself, the employment situation within the Company has not improved. Also, the workers have been agitated at the minimum \$4 per hour or more than at the lowest level, given the high cost of living in the Old Capital and also Fiji as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are other employee issues with PAFCO which I would like to highlight, which include;

- Non-payment of wages at the right time;
- Discrepancies regarding lead issues;
- Meal allowances not paid to the workers;
- Communication breakdown; and
- The need to recruit more suitably qualified people in positions of administration and operations management.

Sir, then there are Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) at Workplace issues at the Levuka Cannery where personal protective equipment are not on par with required standards: workers have to pay for a second pair of uniform; overcrowding in the changing rooms; longer working hours; unfair disciplinary sanctions and there is no disciplinary committee to institute free and fair hearing of employees' concerns towards disciplinary matters.

Another issue which I intend to be noted, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that, it is in line with PAFCO's objective with SDG No. 1 on No Poverty. We may boast to be the "Home of Sun Bell" and we may boast of paying bonuses, talk big on corporate reforms, and waive the few good cards and say, "All is well", but the fact remains. Unless and until we transform our food product processing companies owned by the State in alignment with SDG 1, we are not doing justice to ourselves and to the people of this nation.

Mr. Speaker Sir, fish, besides a staple diet to all our homes in Fiji therefore it is a substitute for red meat that it increases its demand in the market given the high Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) cases in Fiji and people turning to the choice of floating diet from red meat to white meat, and also with the challenges caused by climate change and the result in the natural disasters as well as environmental exploitation, apart from the use of food security, there is also a dire need for a fish sanctuary to sustain our fish stock.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, PAFCO operates in a relatively tough environment with local international competition therefore it is of utmost importance that management continuously renew their strategies in order to sustain its business and continue to be the major employer in Lomaiviti.

To conclude, Sir, PAFCO has worked miles and we are proud of its achievements and so thankful for its contribution towards the development of the Lomaiviti Province. However, there are still milestone to pass before we can really inculcate the sense of belongingness and ownership of the Company, given the heavy-handed treatment of its workers who are mostly the people of Lomaiviti where PAFCO is based, yet remains a distant dream for now. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. O. NAIQAMU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I wish to start by congratulating the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, the Honourable Vijay Nath and the Committee Members for their close scrutiny of the Report and their recommendations. I also wish to acknowledge the Ministry of Youth and Sports in facilitating the development....

(Chorus of interjections)

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

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Honourable Speaker, I thank you and I thank the Committee for the Report that they have tabled in the House that we are debating this morning. Honourable Speaker, I just want to make a short contribution with regards to PAFCO. Like my learned friend from Levuka, PAFCO and my ties to Levuka for that matter, and been raised there for a number of years, I realised how critical PAFCO is to the local economy, particularly to the ladies of Ovalau, who make their living working for PAFCO in the so many years.

I think the House is hearing today some of the significant challenges that PAFCO is going through and definitely needs assistance and every help that it can get in the future to continue to remain relevant, given the current situation around the world by way of competition and the open market that brings a similar product from other jurisdictions that land on our shelves cheaper than what PAFCO produces and a much better price.

So, from that perspective, I would like to say that PAFCO, I think, has been given a lot of lead service in the past, and I am not just saying from the non-effort of this particular Government

but from previous years that things could have been better. I know during my time in Government, there were plans to relocate PAFCO to Lautoka.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Why didn't you move it?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- We could not move it because the Government's decision was to keep it in Ovalau because of the people. So, my point exactly that it cannot remain there, under the current arrangement under which the Company currently now operates. Obviously, the biggest cost sector for PAFCO is power.

Ovalau has a diesel generator and it is running that factory and chewing almost 40 percent of the operational cost of the company. It is not getting any fish locally. They are buying fish from the Marshalls. The fish are all going to Samoa. Sir, we cannot get fish in numbers here. I see the recommendation of the Committee where it is saying that PAFCO should research, pursue more viable revenue opportunities that exist with regards to value adding by-products such as fish oil, fish meal, fish balls thereby maximising returns.

Honourable Speaker, we get Sun Bell on the shelf, Koro Sea. Any customer who walks into a shop seeing these two products versus Solomon Blue, he will pick Solomon Blue. Now, every Fijian citizen should really be concerned, like fish, like dairy, it is a struggling industry and the Government needs to give it the attention it deserves. I know it is dying in Levuka but we have to keep it in Levuka. It is essential for the economy of Levuka for the people of Ovalau. More than 400 ladies get employed in that factory, and you know what, Honourable Speaker, they take the best loins, they wrap it up in plastic, they freeze it and then Bumble Bee sends it to America. That is the necessity of that business right now.

I just want to raise before I conclude, Honourable Speaker, my concern is in the 10-year contract that is now been signed. This is the report from 2016, we are kind of three years into it. So, it will be like three years maybe now into the new contract where I hope that the Committee is seeing value adding in the refuse of fish really, not in the best part of the fish that we are sending away. So, what does the 10 years contract with Bumble Bee bring to the economy? Is it an expansion of the quality of fish coming out of Levuka for our people? Is it going to allow PAFCO in 10 years to actually market the loins themselves? These are significant issues that needs to be looked at because all in all, Honourable Speaker, out of the knowledge that I have, PAFCO was struggling at some time to remain strategic partners with PAFCO and we are grateful that we do have one but that does not mean that we should not be servant to Bumble Bee.

Now, I really hope that the Government is going to look at it because in the words of the Chairman of PAFCO, Mr. Iqbal Jannif, he said that we need more business-minded people. So, I am just saying that the business of PAFCO really should make PAFCO grow for Fiji and Levuka into the future, not invest in fish oil but bring back the fish oil that we are sending away with minimal benefit to our people.

So, that is my contribution today and Honourable Speaker, I wish PAFCO well, seriously I do and I really hope as much as we can to keep it in Ovalau. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Mitieli Bulanauca, you have the floor.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I do support the Committee's Report with regards to PAFCO and we in this House should whole-heartedly support the venture in Levuka

particularly in ensuring that one of our exports is not endangered particularly our marine resources within the 200 miles EEZ.

I must congratulate the shareholding or ownership of PAFCO with Bumble Bee and the Government. That, Honourable Speaker, Sir, is the way things should be done here in Fiji. We need to have partnership between foreigners and locals. In this instance, Honourable Speaker, Sir, I am saddened that Investment Fiji has failed in that matter. As already being highlighted, the locals have not been reserved for business with foreigners in Fiji.

Secondly, the reservation is supposed to be with resource owners as in fishing, shipping, water; it is absent, it is not there. I request if the Government could seriously look at that. Just an example with the Bumble Bee and the Government of Fiji to encourage landowners and foreigners to form partnerships and do business in Fiji, particularly with their own resources and be competitive, not only locally but internationally as well. I think that is absent there. Reservation needs to be done to ensure that locals or resource owners do participate in business, particularly with their resources locally and also for export. It is important that Investment Fiji ensures that or review their reservations or restrictions on business activities here in Fiji.

I also wish to remind us, Honourable Speaker, Sir, that it is important to ensure that our tuna supply is sustainable. Our expertise in the private sector can advise us on ways to do things, particularly to have diplomatic dialogue and agreements with our foreign neighbours in order to get as many tuna supplies to PAFCO as possible, whether through our local fishing vessels or international fishing vessels. It is important to support this business in PAFCO.

There are thousands of workers and there is only one place that is gender unbalance, 1 to 10: 10 women to 1 man. I do support and we encourage that for any businesses to deal with resources in Fiji, to have more women come into the workforce and it is important to support social economic benefits that will improve PAFCO, Levuka Town, the 28 villages and settlements in Ovalau and also Lomaiviti as a whole. Thank you, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Anare Jale, you have the floor.

HON. A. JALE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, for allowing me to contribute to the debate and I thank the Chairman for the Report that is before us for discussion. I think we should all be grateful for the decision to establish PAFCO in Levuka.

I want to acknowledge the decision and foresightedness of the late Ratu Dreunamisimisi, who initiated the establishment of PAFCO in Levuka. It was at that time that the people of Lomaiviti will find a way to Suva to look for employment. We have been talking about urban drifts and this type of initiative is what we need in Fiji. We should try to contain our people in the locations where they live.

Although, PAFCO has been meeting a lot of challenges in its operations, in terms of transportation of its finished products to markets, I would like to commend the Board of the PAFCO for the decision to continue to operate from Levuka because the contribution that PAFCO has given to the people of Lomaiviti, in particular people of Ovalau, I think it has met the plan and the view of the people that started this operation in Levuka and I thank them for that.

I rose to speak on this because although we are talking about Lomaiviti, some of the women who have been referred to as working in PAFCO are also from Ono, where I come from. They live in Viro and a big portion of people in Viro are benefitting from the thinking and foresightedness of the late Ratu Dreunamisimisi at that time. *Vinaka vakalevu*, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you Honourable Speaker, Sir. I wish to make a short contribution on the debate before the House.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs on the reviewing of the important industry at PAFCO which plays a supporting livelihood for the people of Ovalau and Lomaiviti.

I wanted to at the same time, Honourable Speaker, Sir, just expand on some of the points that has been highlighted by my colleagues from the Opposition. Honourable Peceli Vosanibola indicated about increasing the industry in canning in Ovalau. The major portion the business of PAFCO is basically on loins. They take in loins and then they re-package and then send it back to Bumble Bee for the final processes and canning.

PAFCO is basically dependent on the Skipjack Tuna which is a limited resource within Fiji because of the change in the migratory pattern of the tuna stock. I think I have alluded to in this Parliament that due to climate change the tuna (which is mainly the Skipjack Tuna) that used to be caught by fishing vessels in Fiji, because *El Nino* and *La Nina* have moved North and East so basically we have run out of Skipjack. So PAFCO is basically getting limited Skipjack with the....

HON. SPEAKER.- Your time is up, the bell is ringing.

(Laughter)

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Basically the off-cuts from the loins that is being processed for Bumble Bee.

Secondly, is the subject of diversification. As I have alluded to Honourable Speaker, to diversify the activity at PAFCO will need a lot of work on the availability of raw materials. At the moment in PAFCO it can operate to around about 29,000 metric tonnes. We are only receiving 20,000 metric tonnes, we have a gap of 9,000 metric tonnes and the Government is trying its best to try and secure more tuna products from our Pacific Island nations up the North; Kiribati and Tuvalu.

He has said that one of the main costs is energy. This is basically being caused by the fact that fuel suppliers cannot maintain the holding tanks within Levuka which is then providing fuel for the generators. We have been discussing with the fuel suppliers to actually store fuel instead of trucking fuel on every run that the inter-island ferries do from Natovi to Levuka.

Employment issues: I think that is an issue that has been ongoing. Last time the Honourable Prime Minister and I went to PAFCO, we had long discussions with the company and the workers and our Ministry has been working with PAFCO to try and resolve all the outstanding issues.

I think that answers the basic queries that have been coming from my colleagues on the Opposition side. I would like to emphasis again Recommendation 6 where the Committee have highlighted for the need to look for an external supplier of tuna. As I have alluded to, this is an area that the Ministry of Fisheries is exploring through support of bilateral partners and we hope to see this through.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- I hope.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- In saying that Honourable Speaker, Sir, I am in support of the subject on debate before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- We have covered this enough, but we will have one more speaker. Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, just a few comments in respect of PAFCO given that it comes under Public Enterprises.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality of the matter is that, there are obviously certain issues with PAFCO being located in Levuka.

In fact, a few years ago I recall that the PAFCO Board and Bumble Bee actually made a proposal to shift PAFCO's entire operations to Suva because it was a lot more commercially-sustainable to do so, because most of the ships come to Suva, and what it does it adds an added cost to them if they come to Suva then go on to Levuka. And, of course, there would have been enormous socio-economic implications, employment opportunities would have missed out in the Lomaiviti Group, and they were forceful with their submissions and we made a decision for the relocation not to take place, because obviously we wanted to ensure that the economy environment in the Lomaiviti Group stays buoyant. But, it also goes to prove the point that there are certain commercial imperatives that need to be met. If you look at it purely from a commercial perspective, you will say "Move it because this is where we get the higher margins."

The point about the loins, et cetera, yes, the loins do go away to USA, and as the Minister also highlighted that it is Bumble Bee's core business, but they are also a shareholder within PAFCO itself, there is a very small percentage.

The Fijian Government owns majority of the shareholding from memory. In fact, I just vibered one of the persons in the Ministry of Economy to find out the exact percentage, but it is 6 percent from memory. But, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I stand to be corrected, of course but, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality is that the tuna stocks are also depleting.

Much of the work that we have been doing offshore are internationally through the COP23 efforts and also Fiji launched the "Oceans Pathway" and essentially to demonstrate that the health of the ocean is obviously deteriorating, the tuna stocks are depleting because of overfishing, and one point in time, we had ships all the way coming from Spain into our waters over here to fish. Fishing fleets that are subsidised highly by these Governments, including places from Taiwan and even from China, that have their fuel subsidies given to them and they come and basically fish it out.

Recently, we were informed that, I think it was Kiribati or Tuvalu that has declared a huge marine reserve out in the Pacific Ocean. Some say that their fishing area is almost the size of India, and they have a huge marine reserve, and what actually happens is that these overseas fleets come along so if this circle is the marine reserve, the ships actually sit on the periphery (border) of this marine reserve and they throw bait or whatever to lure the fish out of the marine reserve and simply catch them and take them away. These are some of the challenges we are facing and obviously the ability for PAFCO to source this tuna is becoming more and more limited because of these sorts of pressures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously, we on this side of the House, are concerned about PAFCO, are concerned about the workers, I mean, not just because I am from Nadroga and I should have some women from Nadroga working there, there is no reason I should be concerned. We are concerned about everyone, but the reality, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that, we have tried to put in place some measures.

If you look at the Budgets in the past few years, we have actually given some grant funding in terms of the ice plant, in terms of the capacity to produce electricity or access electricity. We have also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government introduced a levy because one of the issues and (I wonder if the Honourable Members are aware of this or not), we said that what most of these foreign ships used to do, they would actually fish in the waters around Fiji, come to Suva and then they have their mother ships waiting here.

So you have the smaller fishing boats that come here, then they transfer the fish onto the mother ships and they take it away. Now this fish would not actually hit our books, in other words, it will not hit our contribution towards our GDP. So what we did was, we imposed a levy and in fact PAFCO did say that since the imposition of the levy, we are seeing some of these fishing boats saying, 'Well, it's worth our while not to pay the levy, we might as well sell the fish to PAFCO'. That was one of the objectives of this.

The other objective, of course, was that when this fish comes along, even if they do some basic processing of that fish in Suva or Lami or wherever it is, it will actually hit our books, it will actually create some form of employment, it will also create some form of commercial activity and so we are taking these steps.

The other step that we have also taken, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that we now pay a subsidy to subsidise our Fijian fishing fleet that is registered in Fiji. So we have Solander, Fiji Fish and all of the others who are still in the game, we are actually now paying them a levy and the last payment we did was last year or the year before last. They get about \$300,000 to 500,000 depending on the size of the fleet and depending on how many boats they have, of course, within the fleet and what is the catch and the number of people they employ.

We are actually providing that level of assistance, so I think we need to understand that the fishing industry is actually going through a particular phase at this point in time, and we need to understand the commercial realities. I hope the Honourable Vosanibola understands that to keep PAFCO in Ovalau is actually commercially not the best place to be, but we will, as Government support it to be there and obviously the infrastructure around it needs to be built.

The fact that Levuka is a heritage town, it is under UNESCO now and also has its limitations because you cannot simply pull down buildings and do those kind of renovations that are required. So there are certain geographical limitations, certain municipality restrictions too but within the framework we are obviously working to ensure that PAFCO does become better commercially.

Honourable Tikoduadua talked about sustainability and the dairy industry. His leader is on record for saying that the dairy industry a few years ago is not sustainable because we are not best at it, so therefore we should allow imports into it. Well, we obviously have a different perspective. We believe that sometimes import substitution is not the only way to go, we believe that there can be a mixture of having foreign goods coming in but also at the same time developing a local industry.

So with those few words, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to commend the Committee for this and I would also like to thank the Board and yes, we need to improve the huge Board membership. We have had one of the former Chairman of PAFCO ended up in Naboro too, as you know after he was Chairperson, we have, of course, tried to get people with integrity within the Board and we continue to do that. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General. Honourable Chair, you have the floor for your Right of Reply.

HON. V. NATH.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. First of all, I congratulate and thank all the Honourable Members for their contributions towards this Report. I also would like to show my appreciation and thanks to the Managing Director, Mr. Bhan Pratap Singh, and the very abled Chairperson and his Board, Mr. Iqbal Jannif, who has been a strength despite the hardship of this Company.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also would like to thank the General Manager of Bumble Bee, Mr. Carter, who was always accommodating to answer any questions if we have got any. To correct the Honourable Member, Honourable Pio Tikoduadua, when I read: "... to value-add the by-product such as fish oil, fish meal, fish bone to return ...", in fact, at this point in time all the fish oil which is collected, goes overseas for refining. What the Committee meant here, that this oil can be refined in Fiji.

Most of our Honourable Members here, I believe, they have cholesterol problem and they take these Omega 3 capsules, this is made official, Honourable Member, they should know that we are encouraging PAFCO to come in a joint venture probably to refine this oil and make Omega 3 capsules.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V. NATH.- With those words, Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you very much for your time.

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

(Chorus of "Noes")

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

Honourable Members, before we suspend proceedings for lunch, I am advised that all Honourable Members have been invited to the traditional ceremony of welcome for the Secretary-General of the United Nations which will be held tomorrow morning at the Grand Pacific Hotel.

Honourable Members, as such this will mean that the House will not be able to meet at 9.30 a.m., but at a later time tomorrow.

In that regard, I am invoking my powers on Standing Orders 20 and hereby rule that the Parliament will meet at 10.30 a.m. tomorrow, so as to allow all Honourable Members to attend the traditional welcome ceremony for the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Honourable Members, we will now suspend for lunch in the Big Committee Room, and I remind the Women Honourable Members of their meeting in the Small Committee Room during lunch hour. We will resume at 2.30 p.m. as usual.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.50 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.35 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, the Honourable Viam Pillay, to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

REVIEW REPORT - MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORTS 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

HON. V. PILLAY.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I move that:

Parliament debates the Review Report on the Ministry of Youth and Sports 2016 Annual Report which was tabled on 16th May, 2018.

HON. G. VEGNATHAN.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to speak on the motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Youth and Sports 'core responsibilities are focused on facilitating youth and sports development through the establishment of a conducive policy environment that provides strategic support systems, initiative for personal development, character-building, sports policy, implementation and community-based youth led programmes.

The Committee was referred on 5th March, 2018 the 2016 Annual Report of the Ministry. The Committee convened a meeting with the Ministry officials on 7th May, 2018 to deliberate on their Ministry's Annual Report. The Ministry continues to strive to deliver its services on the facilitation of youth and sports development through the establishment of a conducive policy environment which provides strategic support system, initiative for personal development, character-building, sports policy implementation and community-based youth-led programmes.

The Ministry is mandated to achieve youth and sports development through skills training and non-formal education to support youths between the ages of 15 and 35 to turn to education or to enter any form of training or employment to expand their ability to contribute to economic growth.

The Committee was pleased to note that the Ministry aligned its work and commitments towards achieving the SDGs. Trainings were conducted and projects identified and funded to help young people generate income and improve livelihoods, the move to offer accredited trainings to empower young people and capacity-building and project establishment to improve livelihoods and addressing gender and disability inequality.

Through multi-skills training, including more women in traditionally-male-oriented skills training, the Ministry is working towards empowering women to get jobs or start their own businesses. Likewise, they have similar trainings to empower persons with disabilities.

The Committee acknowledges and commends the overall performance of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 2016. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Chairperson. The floor is open for anyone wishing to take the floor. Honourable Salote Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I acknowledge the work from the Committee, the Chair and their Members of which I am also a Member but I thank you for the opportunity to make a contribution to the debate.

Honourable Speaker, I also would like to remind the House of the accusation from the other side of the House that our statistics or data are questionable, and I would like to draw the attention to the statistical news that was provided by the Parliament, and I acknowledge those statistics, Honourable Speaker, from your Honourable Office for which I will be quoting from, and to reassure the other side that our data is reliable and valid because that is the data from the Bureau of Statistics.

Honourable Speaker, in regards to the statistical news and I would like to quote, it says that the medium age of the population is 27.5 years which means that half of Fiji's population is below that ages, and having said that, particularly, in line with the National Youth Policy which stipulates the cut-off age for youths is 35 and, even though they have the YES Programme with the cut-off age at 40, that can reliably suggest to us that the youths of Fiji are sitting at half the population. Fifty percent or maybe even more, and according to the statistical news, the Fiji population sits at 884,887. That was at 5th January, 2018.

Honourable Speaker, with that kind of youth population we have in Fiji and we relate that to the budgetary allocation that is given to the Ministry, which is only \$24 million. We can see how dispersed any development programme that target youths will become.

Honourable Speaker, and I will refer to Recommendations 1 and 2 and the Recommendations read:

1. The Ministry to strengthen partnership and collaboration with relevant authorities and key stakeholders to access the available assistance and resources.
2. The provision of financial assistance to those that have undergone training to be able to start up their own business and improve their livelihood.

That, Honourable Speaker, strongly suggests that the Ministry is inadequately resourced.

In that regard, Honourable Speaker, I would like to highlight and acknowledge the various Youth Centres that come under the responsibilities of the Ministry. For example, you have the Valelevu Youth Centre, that specialises in music and its development. We have the Naqere Youth Centre with carpentry, et cetera. There is one on agriculture.

That is good and I would like to applaud that, Honourable Speaker, but the issue of concern here is the very small numbers that the institution can take. For example in Naqere, the numbers is not even 50 at any one time. In that regard, Honourable Speaker, it will be good if the Ministry could relook at its intake. But for the Ministry to increase the intake, it will need to expand its facilities. Also the facilities can be replicated all around the country, for example, the Valelevu Youth Centre which specialises in music, maybe there could be one in the Western Division where the tourism industry is very much in demand there in regards to music.

In that regards, Honourable Speaker, of course, the Ministry is under resourced and budget session is coming up in June, and I am hopeful that the Honourable Minister for Economy would be able to increase the budgetary allocation for a very vital Ministry, like the Ministry of Youth, with that number of population of almost 400,000 youth to be able to equip the Ministry to adequately handle or address the unemployment and other issues with our youth in Fiji.

Honourable Speaker, on Recommendation No. 3, it is the saying that if the Ministry, with its training institution, could benchmark with the Tutu Rural Training Centre.

Having said, that Honourable Speaker, we must note that in the previous weeks, months and years, marijuana cultivation is rife in the country and our youth are involved. We see our youth, if they are found guilty, then they get into prison. The rate of marijuana cultivation that is going on in Fiji, the prison will not be able to hold all those youth who are convicted of this crime.

Honourable Speaker, that is where the Government needs to think outside the box. You look at the Recommendation in the Report, it is very tunnel vision. The Ministry is saying that there is not enough land, but there needs to be an alternative to marijuana cultivation where our youth fall victim.

Honourable Speaker, I would like to suggest *yaqona* (kava) cultivation. The Honourable Minister for Agriculture and the Honourable Minister for Youth are sitting next to each other. So a very good initiative and programme for them to look at is the *yaqona* cultivation in order to divert or to take away our youth from marijuana cultivation. Otherwise, Honourable Speaker, the way that marijuana cultivation is going, there will come a time when our prison will not be able to contain our youth.

So, I am urging the Honourable Minister for Youth, the Honourable Minister for Economy and Honourable Minister for Agriculture to please, look at an alternative programme, apart from marijuana cultivation whereby we can successfully align that programme, like *yaqona* cultivation, along with the Tutu Framework in Taveuni, to be able to address the youth unemployment in Fiji.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I contribute to this motion, may I take this opportunity to convey my sincere condolences to the families of the late Mrs. Aruna Ramrakha, widow of the late Dr. Shiu Ramrakha, who was once a Director of Medical Services in Fiji.

Her family members live in Kavanagasau. You know that area, Sir, you have been up there exercising with the *Gurkhas* in Nadroga, and also families in Sydney and many other centres abroad.

Mrs. Aruna Ramrakha, died this morning at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Camperdown, New South Wales, Australia.

On this day, Sir, in 1879, her great grandmother arrived on the steam ship *MV Leonidas* from India as part of her group of indentured workers, brought to Fiji under a Bilateral Agreement between the Government of India and the Colonial Government of Fiji.

Mrs. Ramrakha, sister in law of the well-known barrister and solicitor and later politician, then victim of the 1987 *coup*, now my friend and advisor on all matters, Indian, lies dead in Camperdown, New South Wales, Australia. May her soul rest in peace.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I commend the Standing Committee Chairman and the Members of his Committee, who submitted this Report, including in that membership the late Anare Tuidraki Vadei and two other Members who are no longer Members of this House - Ruveni Nadalo and Alifereti Wakanivesi Nabulivou of the Emperor Gold Mine Strike notoriety.

I also commend the work of the Ministry Officials, contributed to the Report. I also thank the then Minister and his Assistant Minister for their guidance of the Ministry over the Report period, who both are also not here with us, and I wish them well in whatever they are doing now.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I saw the Tutu Training Centre in Taveuni mentioned in the recommendation which also drew a response from the Ministry.

During my term in Government, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I had gone many times to visit Monfort Boys Training Institutions in Suva and in Savusavu, as well as the Tutu Training Centre in Taveuni. I was very impressed with the dedication and level of skills displayed by the leadership and staff at those institutions, many of whom came from and are still coming from India.

Some of the local young men and women, some not so young now, went back to the nearby villages and showed the benefits of their training. While some still do, some have reverted back to the slow and low pace of activities and results in the villages.

We may have, Sir, to incorporate village leadership and *vanua* leadership into the training programmes of these institutions and Government institutions, like the *tikina*, *vanua*, the provinces and villages to keep abreast with best practices qualities we are now trying to inculcate into our Government and NGO institutions.

While we review the Annual Reports, Sir, we should not only be limiting ourselves to reviewing the performances of Ministries and Institutions but also be free to make recommendations to improve their activities, review their Missions and Visions to dovetail with our national programmes, as we keep abreast with global developments.

At morning tea this morning, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I told the Honourable Minister for Health what my wife told me. My wife has been helping look after my sister-in-law in the Lau Ward of CWM Hospital. She has been so impressed with the cleanliness, friendliness and efficiency of the staff in the Ward, particularly the cheerfulness of the student nurses who help the patients.

We hear so many complaints about our health workers. This is one time when I have heard glowing reports of the staff in our Hospital. And we must also keep our ears and eyes open to see the good work being done by our own people, and not only recognise those who have come from abroad and offer voluntary services for our people.

Yesterday, we spent a lot of time commending, congratulating and thanking Volunteer Organisations from abroad, who send their Medical and Surgical Teams to treat and operate on our patients here at no cost to the patients.

I also add my word of thanks to them, but we hear very little commendation of our own health workers. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I request the Honourable Minister for Health to convey the thanks and appreciation of my family to the staff at CWM Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I believe we sell ourselves too short at all times. We have the calibre of people to raise our own standards in everything we do.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is one of the main engines of growth in Fiji and we, as legislators, must not limit ourselves to reviewing their performance, but must also be proactive in suggesting to Government how we can improve the performance of this particular engine to power our country and people forward.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the SVT Government established a separate Ministry of Youth and Sports, before then it was always an appendix to the Ministry of Education. The PSC posted my former Fiji Rugby Captain, Pio Bosco Tikoisuva, as the first Director of Sports in the Ministry.

I congratulate the Ministry and encourage all in it, to continue to strive for better performances in all things. Thank you, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Leawere, you have the floor.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to say *bula vinaka* and a good afternoon to the students of Dudley High School, *vinaka vakalevu*. As a former teacher, I have respect for the students, that is why, I am not competing for their votes.

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the motion before the House and wish to begin by thanking the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for the review on the Report on the Ministry of Youth and Sports Annual Report for 2016.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will focus on my speech on how best the recommendations made by the Committee can result into meaningful job creation and empowerment of our youth in nation building and youth leadership.

So first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, Sir, what is of importance to the youth is the provision of education and training. We all appreciate the work done by this Government in respect of our education sector and we are grateful to the Honourable Minister.

We are also thankful for the work that has been done in the education sector by the previous Governments and all the key stakeholders, like the Unions. However, the question is, how are the substantial investments made in education and training in preparing our youth for labour market challenges at home and also abroad?

Fiji, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is now part of the global economy and we cannot divorce or isolate ourselves from the world or from the world labour market. As such, when we device policies and programmes, Mr. Speaker, Sir, or legislate laws and provide funding, or write reports making recommendations, it is important to refer and confirm or rather align these things in line with the International Labour Organisation objectives, while keeping the relevance Sustainable Development Goals in mind. This is a space, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that needs to be filled.

With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I may raise the question of how the Ministry of Youth and Sports sensitises its policies and programmes with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour? This, Mr. Speaker, Sir, will device policies and programmes and to groom our youth for national, regional and international labour market.

As it appears, Mr. Speaker, Sir, what is happening is creating jobs either on an ad hoc basis or as usual as part of a band-aid solution to satisfy the demands and needs of our consumption driven economy. Also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it does not empower the workforce of Fiji via the processes that need to be put in place for specialised training and achieving a planned labour market in order to avert brain-drain issues.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, Sir, while commending the work of the Ministry of Youth and Sports on what it is doing for our youth, let me make some useful suggestions in line with interest and aspirations of the youth and our national economy. They find their genesis not in the FijiFirst but in the SODELPA Manifesto. Let me, Mr. Speaker, Sir, highlight the following.

Firstly, the Ministry of Youth and Sports need to work and implement the necessary mechanisms to achieve the benchmark with regard to youth training and get this accredited with the Fiji Higher Education Commission and also accreditation with reputable tertiary institution providers.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has to learn to think and act outside the box and extend its collaboration with Non-Government Organisations with the youth network to enable the benefits of its policies and programmes and to reach out more to the youths of Fiji.

Thirdly, while facing constraints of funding, the youth after training, the Ministry of Youth needs to chalk out smart strategies which can include going into partnership with international agencies and foreign governments. This will secure funding for initiatives such as grants to youths upon training and “Work for Pay” schemes.

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are still in the dark about the National Youth Development Plan which was highlighted by the Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports in the last sitting of this House. I suggest that we need to see and debate the plan so as to make sure that these includes addressing the challenges of the present and future labour market needs, and how best Fiji can achieve that while in the process, train and empower our youth.

Fifthly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is an elite section of youth in every society who are privileged to attain training overseas in specific areas either on TELS or any other sponsorship. How the Ministry of Youth and Sports engage with these youths and to what extent is an issue? The Ministry of Youth and Sports should ensure that the knowledge, experience and the skills they have attained abroad is not used solely to empower themselves but the youths of Fiji. It has to be a two-ways street, the Government empowers you and you empower the nation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, having made those suggestions and expressing the hope that they form the basis of fruitful discussions on this Report and related matters, let me also express my concern about the lack of mention for another section of our youth who are disabled. They too deserve a special attention so as to have equal opportunity for capacity building and empowering themselves and the nation. They have every right to do so according to the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji and they need to be an integral part of every policy and plan that is being devised and implemented.

The other area, Mr. Speaker, Sir, among the youth fraternity that needs a special attention is the health and medical sector in view of the following issues which I would like to highlight this in this House:

- Rising cases of NCDs in Fiji;
- Issues related to HIV and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs);
- Substance abuse and increase in drug related offences;

- Student disciplinary issues and youth brawls during games or while loitering in urban centres;
- Erosion of moral and social values and the breakdown of traditional and customary institutions and structures.

Before summing up, Mr. Speaker, Sir, while we talk big and great about youth empowerment and sports, let me express the sheer disappointment of the Opposition for the exclusion of the Tavua College Golden Boy, Yeshnil Karan who excelled at the Coca-Cola Games this year from participating in the Pacific Games in Samoa this year. We deplore the decision of FASANOC in this respect and demand that FASANOC be investigated with the necessary clean up and this is long overdue at FASANOC without delay. We hope the Honourable Minister for Employment, Youth and Sports is listening to this.

With these few words, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I offer my good wishes to the new Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports and his staff every success in the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee in this Report and together take up with these issues which has been raised in this debate for youth development and empowerment in Fiji. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate and before I go into the debate proper, I just want to go back to what the last Honourable Member had mentioned. Apart from the suggestions and the sweeping statement that he made, the four or five suggestions that he had mentioned are already in place. So come up with something new, make debating lively and come up with some new ideas....

(Laughter)

And also please do not be in the dark, otherwise it will be a real problem for you.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, my update will basically capture some of the issues that have been raised by few Honourable Members from the other side. But, at the outset let me make it very clear to the Honourable Members that you do not have to see the budget allocation for the youths only from the Ministry of Youth. You have to see it in totality the budget allocation for the other Ministries which is given for youth development. So if you some search, you will come to those figure. That was the only advice that I thought, that I will give to my colleagues on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on Recommendation One: “The Ministry to strengthen partnership and collaboration with relevant authorities and key stakeholders to access the available assistance and resources.”

Mr. Speaker, Sir, may I add that the most important stakeholder for the Ministry are our youths and this has become the guiding principle of our outreach programmes. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we started this with the first ever National Youth and Sports Conference held earlier this year. The National Youth and Sports Conference was a grand success and inclusive of a diverse grouping of Fijians from across the island.

As I have said earlier on, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Conference was designed to listen to the voices of our youth leaders across the country; all of us did. The result was a comprehensive outcome statement and Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have used that as the basis of our expanded submission to meet the needs of the youth as expressed by them. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it also provides a safe pathway between the youths as our key stakeholders. The Ministry has rolled out its programmes designing to

transform their lives and contributing to nation building. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have established relevant stakeholders, the work they are doing and the means to network to carry forward our areas of mutual interest. This includes Government and community stakeholders and the great input from them and the corporate sector at the National Job Fair.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the National Youth and Sports Conference and the National Job Fair were both initiatives that enabled us to work together with these stakeholders and most importantly the youth themselves, so we can map the pathways to provide meaningful experiences to our youths.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the point of budget allocation, we have just heard yesterday, the Honourable Attorney-General had mentioned that during the budget presentation we have been discussing about the youths. And this Government is very well aware of the youth population that we have in this country.

As part of our new direction of service delivery in areas like training, we are looking forward to our budget so that we can focus on the long term outputs and outcomes for our youths. As the Committee has pointed out, this should lead to long term benefits in particular economic empowerment opportunities. Mr. Speaker, Sir, in this regard, we are also working on a key partnership with training institutions to include financial and skill training as part of the programme.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, once again in response to the Committee's findings, we are moving forward with the assessment of rural training centres and to see how it can best be a model to be followed in our other rural training centres across Fiji. The work has begun on this, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

One of the key focus areas is to ensure that we have an approach for sustaining through key delivery in job and economic opportunities, post-training and in this regard, we will work closely with the aligned ministries namely; Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Forests and Ministry of Trade, to provide the best possible outcome for all stakeholders.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you and I also thank the Committee. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to make a few comments as Ministry of Economy has raised. However, just for clarification because I do not want to be seen to be misleading Parliament.

I had said earlier on about PAFCO's ownership. The actual ownership by the Fijian Government is actually 99.6 percent and the other 0.4 percent is owned by about 25 other shareholders. They include estates like:

- Estates of J. R. McGowan
- Trustees of Estate J. R. McGowan
- Costello Limited
- Estate of R.A. Rickets
- Estate of Sir Henry M. Scott
- On Wah Chang & Co. Limited
- Estate of Emma Dora Patterson
- Lady M. K. Falvey
- Fijian Development Board

Those were some of the larger shareholders but these are the people who are bound to be shareholders.

Just also for the record, in 2015 we actually gave \$9 million as a grant to PAFCO to build their cold storage facility. We gave \$1.7 million in the 2017/2018 Budget to PAFCO to maintain the seawall in Levuka that was falling over and in July 2018, the Honourable Prime Minister announced when he went to Levuka, the 12.5 percent salary increase to all the 1,100 non-management staff. This is just for the record.

In respect of the youths, we have said this repeatedly, Honourable Salote Radrodro, keeps on mentioning about budgetary allocation for a specific ministry being the only indicator as to how we are helping that Ministry, for example, the Ministry of Women. The fact of the matter is, when we build a bridge, women use it too. When we build a road, women use it too, the youth use it too.

When the Minister for Health goes and there is a new health centre, we improve health facilities and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition talked about it, it is not only restricted to men or not only restricted to women; the youth use it, the children use it, so budget should not be looked at how much money you are giving to a specific Ministry. Honourable Radrodro, you need to look beyond that. Just to highlight that to you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Unfortunately, she talked about statistics. She failed miserably to actually account for the other statistics. Bulk of the Fijian population today are urban or peri-urban based. If you talk to most of the young students over there, they are from urban or peri-urban areas. They do not have space in the Suva-Nausori corridor to go and plant *yaqona*. People are urban based, we need to find urban based solutions.

If you go and talk to the youths and say, “we want you to go to some isolated place now, leave your school or after school and go and plant *yaqona*”, a lot of them will actually resist that. Yes, there are opportunities in plantations, yes, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Youth has been doing work on that.

Tutu Foundation has been talked about, we gave in this year’s Budget \$614,051 to the Tutu programme. We have also given funding for the Navuso Agricultural College too. It is not that those areas are actually missed out, they are actually being funded. But the key to this solution when we talk about youth and employment is creating employment opportunities.

As we have said and the statistics point out that 4.5 percent unemployment rate in Fiji. Yes, there are lot of young people coming through the system. These young students will one day go to Year 13, they will go to university and they will be looking for employment. Of course, they need to be trained.

In order for them to be trained, they need access to higher education and we are providing Toppers, we are providing TELS, we have now as announced by the Honourable Minister for Education, that now the Technical Colleges that have been under the Ministry of Education will go under the umbrella of Fiji National University (FNU) which actually gives a seamless opportunity for those who are doing Modules 1 and 2 to go on to 3, 4 and 5 and get certification, get Diplomas, get Degrees in the specific areas.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are looking at, for example, as I discussed the other day, creating employment opportunities also in the urban areas. We talked about age care, we talked about retirement villages; all of these are new initiatives. We talked about the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. This is why we are protecting the ICT sector from the European oppression in respect of getting rid of the incentives. Most of the young people over here, if you give them a phone, they will be very quickly switched on to the various Apps. They know how to use the Apps. We want to create employment opportunities in those areas, it is not only about *yaqona* farming.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, *marijuana* cultivation is very different to *marijuana* usage. There is a point of difference. Many people will also argue that *marijuana* is not necessarily a key issue but we need to focus on some of what we call “synthetic drugs” which you have not mentioned at all. Synthetic drugs is becoming a problem which we need to keep our people away from.

Now, Mr, Speaker, Sir, the other point I wanted to also highlight, the Honourable Leawere in a moment of fervour said that there should be assistance to disabled persons, youth people. The Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation has introduced through the budgetary allocation disability allowance for the first time, a separate category. We actually provided disability allowance.

We announced two or three years ago a separate tax deduction initiative so if an employer employs a disabled person, we give them a 300 percent tax deduction, for example, to put it in simple terms, if you are paying them a \$100, they get to claim \$300 (300 percent tax reduction). This is to incentivise employers to not discriminate against people with disabilities.

So we have provided all these initiatives, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and, yes, of course, youth issues are very important to us and we need to be able to address it in a holistic manner, not just simply looking at one particular Ministry but as to how we are assisting everyone.

We have the “30 Under 30” initiative at the ADB meeting, very widely lauded, the ADB is very keen on that. The Minister for Industry and Trade has got the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES), it is working well. We have got a number of other initiatives that will soon be announced to be able to ensure that we take a national approach to these matters through the economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I would like to contribute today on the Report at hand on the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Just on the first issue: I was wondering how the Permanent Secretary of Youth and Sports was moved across to the Ministry of Education.

In terms of recruitment, it is related to the Report, the different skillsets, different criteria in terms of the positions, then was moved across by the Minister responsible. I mean, only in Fiji that happens, that you are professionally-appointed into one position and then you are transferred across to another totally different position with different criteria, different requirements.

But anyway, today, I would like to contribute on rugby which I believe the Government of the day has sort of neglected since it came into power in 2006. The Report does not mention anything about the development of rural grounds. That has been an issue for the last 10-15 years. If you go around our rural centres, most of the grounds being used are owned by schools.

My question is to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, what have you been doing in the last 10 years since 2006? The grounds have deteriorated, nothing has happened in terms of the development for rugby fields and most of the rugby unions are borrowing the grounds in schools, and they have been.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.-He is not here so he cannot answer that.

So, why is it not in the Report because ground facility is very critical in rugby development or any other sports development? People might think, “Oh, it is just sports” but no, you know very well, with youth development, sports is very important and we have seen problems with regards to *marijuana*, alcohol abuse, et cetera, at the village level, the youths in the urban areas and they are not developing sports to counter that. So, I am asking the Honourable Minister to, please, look into the ground development because nothing big has happened in the last few years.

The other issue that I would like to bring up with the Minister is regarding the assistance to youth clubs. Prior to the Elections, 12 months before the Elections, there were a lot of presentations of rugby jerseys, tools, spades, brush cutters, but they have disappeared, where are they?

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- That was throughout the four years.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Where are they? So, what I am saying is, the whole youth development project, the whole youth development assistance to clubs is geared towards getting votes and that does not happen 6 months prior to the Elections up to now. If you look at the press release, et cetera, there is nothing, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The other issue that should be highlighted today for the public to know, what has the Government done for the Fiji Sevens Team?

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- What has the Government done for the Fiji 7s Team?

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Put the phone down

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Your side have laptops there, you are looking at *Facebook*, all of you. The Honourable Attorney-General is looking at *Facebook*.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- My notes is in the form, Sir.

HON. MEMBER.- That’s right.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Do not converse across from one side to the other, include the Chair. You have the floor.

(Laughter)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- So, this proposal has been ignored by the Government. It has been sent to them after the Olympic victory and just recently, let me read it out. It has been sent to them and they have ignored it, and this is supported by, I would say, 90 percent of the rugby supporting public of Fiji. This was formulated by a former leader of the Opposition, Mr. Mick Beddoes. I know some of you do not like him.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- It is a very good proposal. Let me read it, Honourable Member:

“Our Fiji Sevens stars have brought glory and fame to Fiji with their dazzling skills and sterling record, the players are our pride and joy, they show the world that a small nation like ours can consistently outclass bigger and wealthier countries.”

They gave us our first Olympic goal in Rio and became the only team to win the Hong Kong Tournament, the only Game of Sevens, five times in a row while most Fiji politicians have failed to unite the country, they have been in power from 2006, 13 years, and they have failed to unite us and today they still fail to unite us, Sir.

Only the Sevens Team has been bringing us together but that is sports but in politics they cannot play the game to unite us. They continue to say that “We are the best, never before in history has anything been done, like we have been doing” basing it, of course, on the last Government’s achievements.

While most Fiji politicians have failed to unite the country, the Sevens men generate patriotic fervour which binds us together. The divisions among us vanish when we watch the team in action. We become one people with one voice and one goal. In light of this why do we allow the powers that be to treat them in such a shoddy manner? This Government is always ready to splash out big ‘bucks’ on all sorts of projects but when it comes to rewarding our Sevens Team, they keep a tight hold on the purse strings.

The FijiFirst Government cheered the players’ on and paid tribute to them but they will not give them a decent and fair pay check. Their spending priorities are focused on their own enrichment and that of their cohorts. Let me give you a few examples in the three years since our Team won Olympic gold, this Government has spent \$11.2 million for their annual Super 15 match. I do not know how much they have spent on our Sevens Team but because we have not heard any major pronouncements....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Stop supporting Mick Beddoes, give us your ideas.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- I am supporting this.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- One can assume that they have done little, consider this, the \$11.2 million for the Super 15 match is on average \$3.7 million per annum for one match a year.

Our Sevens men playing 10 tournaments annually. When they have picked and no longer had get picked what do they get back? That is the question. Instead of continuing with the annual Super 15 match, the Government should reallocate the \$3.7 million a year for the Sevens Squad. With this annual budgetary amount, they can start doing things such as putting every member of the squad on \$30,000 a year and allocate \$150,000 for scores and conversion bonuses.

Every time they win an event, they should be paid \$30,000 bonus. For every outing, each team member to invite two members of their families for the airfares, accommodation, et cetera, instead of those coming and play hockey or golf, and putting together a squad. There is also a lot of expenses in training and camping and support system. So, those are the kinds of things we need to support instead of international tournaments where most of the monies is going out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Lynda Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I wish to commend the Committee with their Report on the Ministry for Youth and Sports, and I also wish to make a contribution to the debate.

I am glad that the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy raised about the issue about the bulk of the population being in urban areas, including our youth. This is again, a cause very dear to my heart and I have raised this earlier about the very big problem that we have of glue sniffing and this has not been mentioned by any of the Members that have spoken in the House thus far to this debate that this is the rising trend amongst our youths and our children and I would like to welcome our school children that are here today.

Welcome here to Parliament, because us being here is really why we are here. This is why we do what we do for our future generations and for our children.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- I am here.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Our children and this huge problem of glue sniffing is something that we really need to take to the next level in terms of laws and I understand there is a Bill that is currently before the Solicitor-General's Office, so I would like to ask the Honourable Attorney-General if he could work on that Bill, the Volatile Substances Control Bill.

It is high time that we do regulate the sale of glue because it is readily available in all stores to our children who can buy one tin of glue at \$5 and six of them can share this and sniff glue and be on a high. It is a high and huge problem and it is affecting the parents of the children and also the attendance of these children at schools, especially in informal settlements and from the Suva to Nausori corridor, Honourable Speaker, Sir, as it has become a really big problem that we need to address. So, I ask the Honourable Attorney-General to move that Bill along so that it can come before the House.

The other issue, Honourable Speaker, Sir, and this is raised in the recommendations in the Report, had been covered briefly by my colleagues and that is the need to strengthen partnership with key stakeholders, coupled with providing financial assistance to train youth.

As has been heard before here in the House, the distribution of the *mataqali* monies and that would be the bulk of the population that is in the rural areas who are receiving *mataqali* monies, a portion of them are youths. You can count Nadi and those who live in the village also, in Ba who were receiving this *mataqali* monies and my suggestion to the Government is, how can you harness this; how can you provide the kinds of training for business opportunities for these young people so that they can put their money to good use rather than what we see as a rising trend for our young people that if they receive that money, they are just being wasteful about it and not saving.

So, yes, you have enabled the individual as you have mentioned the individual rights of each person in the *mataqali* to spend their money how they want to, however it is the Government's responsibility, our responsibility to see how we can provide the training and provide business opportunities for these young people so that they can use that money for business to generate employment and further their education rather than just giving it out to them.

The last issue, Sir, I would like to raise is about the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) Programme. In the YES Programme, there have been a number of youth who have come to me to tell me that it is on hold, that there is an issue with funding. Again, I ask the Government to please prioritise this. You have made a big announcement of it and the young people know about it, please do allocate that portion in the next Budget.

Just to conclude, Mr. Speaker, Sir, with our young people being here, to know that they need to be empowered. With the visit of the UN Secretary General, who is here with us and it is just a quote that I would end this from the former UN Secretary General, the late Kofi Annan, "Young people should be at the forefront of global change an innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace." Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Honourable Speaker, I rise to contribute to the motion. But first of all, Sir, that was very interesting discussions and I was just watching and hearing the meandering that was going on. Obviously, we have the Report that is before us. It was so surprising that I actually asked for the Report again just to read and I found that all that meandering was not in this Report. I was just amazed that this can happen in this Honourable House. You know that we can meander outside the limits of what the Report is trying to say. So that is the first thing I want to say.

Secondly, is in relation to what the Honourable Salote Radrodro has been talking about in terms of substance abuse. We, as a Ministry of Health have recognised that this is an issue, our Mental Health Units have recognised that this is an issue and they have prescribed programmes in terms of how best we can be able to look after it.

Obviously, it is a known fact that our youth are involved in this, not only youth but also adults, so it is not limited to youth but it is also adults. So how do we, as a nation, come around this topic of substance abuse? And it is going to involve a whole of nation approach, not only Government but everyone has to participate in this because it is not only the young people, also adults are involved in substance abuse. And I am not going to elaborate what the substances are, we all know in this august House what the substances are that are being abused in this nation.

From a Minister of Health perspective, in terms of youth, if a child is born, from the time the child is born until he leaves Year 13, he or she is seen 55 times by the Ministry of Health. This is irrespective of whether they cough and they go to the hospital, they have a fever, they are admitted

for something else irrespective, they are seen 55 times. That is the contribution of Government through the Ministry of Health.

That is what is being talked about is that the development of youth is not limited just to the Ministry of Youth but other Ministries also support it - Ministry of Education, one billion dollar Ministry that looks after youth, predominantly the youth of this nation.

Also, those who are employed by the Ministry of Health are predominantly young people who are just finishing adolescence and becoming young adults. So they join us and almost all of them, whether they are doctors, nurses or they are dentists, and also some other areas that we are looking at, we have actually taken them through an internship programme which is a one-year programme where they are intern, they are supervised, they are mentored in the area that they will be working in, also taking into consideration the processes that are happening with them in their growth.

Honourable Speaker, just a few things I wanted to highlight:

1. the meandering that is outside of the limits of this Report; and
2. the fact that the Ministry of Health actually supports youth in many, many ways and a significant amount of the budget of the Ministry of Health and the programmes that it has.

Even the Immunisation Programme, we have one of the best Immunisation Programmes in the world that actually looks after our youth and our children. One of the reasons why measles is taking off now to other areas around the world is because they do not have an immunisation coverage that we have. We believe we have 97 percent immunisation coverage, one of the best in the world and that is an investment in the youth. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I will take two more Speakers, Honourable Pio Tikoduadua and Honourable Niko Nawaikula in that order, and then the Honourable Minister. Honourable Pio Tikoduadua, you have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, I thank the Committee for their Report. Just to be in line with what the Honourable Minister said, I will start with the Report and I will dwell outside before I come back to the Report.

Honourable Speaker, much from across the House has discussed what is in the Report and what is not in it. I will just cover three recommendations for once from the Report:

1. The Ministry is not capitalising on opportunities offered by other relevant stakeholders to assist youth, *vanua*, Church, NGOs and I think there are many more.

So the Honourable Minister should probably take heed of that.

2. Although the Ministry focus is directed towards training and empowering youths in various sectors due to the limited budgetary allocation, the Ministry is unable to financially support or assist those that have undergone training for economic and empowerment opportunities.
3. This has been mentioned by my other Honourable colleagues perhaps, the Ministry could shift their focus and try to align it to the example of the Tutu Rural Training Centre in Taveuni.

Honourable Speaker, I have heard speakers from the Government side talk about all the good things that the Ministry of Youth has done and, of course, all those services to youth and youth empowerment from the other Government Departments. And I agree with many of the things they said to try and gather the majority of the youth to go forward.

But, Honourable Speaker, today I just want to focus on the youth who get left behind. I agree with the Honourable Attorney-General that majority of our youth are actually urban or peri-urban risks. So Tutu is a rural based, *yaqona* and everything else that is probably the dimension for the rural youth and the rural community to follow.

But the picture of our youth that is not coming up in this House is what I want to concentrate on. A real good example of how good youth development, as raised by the Honourable Attorney-General is the “30 Under 30”. They really looked impressive on picture, and I think everyone has been trying to appeal to our children here today, that is probably where they should be heading in future, a modern economy and a modern nation.

However, Honourable Speaker, I invite Honourable Members of this House, try to go out on a Sunday morning at 5.30 a.m. to the bus stand, you will see the youth there. So, many of these youth, whilst it is their choice and their money, need directions. And they live in the community with their families. These are the ones who get left behind, hundreds and hundreds of them, pouring the streets, many of our children will follow.

Now, this is what we have to curtail. We will be fighting across the House, wondering about their future, this is going to be their future.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We’re not fighting.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Probably not fighting, but obviously we are throwing things across.

The Honourable Minister spoke about substance abuse. I will speak on *yaqona*, synthetic drugs, marijuana, and it is a big problem. No one has got the solution. The solution we hear, “throw the youth in jail.”

There are too many youths in jail, too many! The majority are from Tailevu. Now, this is what should be coming into this House and these are the youth who get left behind, Honourable Speaker.

I want to talk about the youth, something about AIDS/HIV. We have got the data lately, too many! We do not get to hear them in this House. The Honourable Minister could take heed of this.

We drive the road everyday through Suva to Nausori, too many youth who should be going to school sell coconuts by the roadside. In Raiwaqa...

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Yes, they do. Then I think maybe you should untint your car and look outside because I am saying, Honourable Speaker,...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- ...I am speaking here and I am just telling the Government. They have the initiative, they have the resources and they have the plan.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- I have done a lot! I have done farming and if you want to know, I can tell you. If you want to know I can take you for rugby and plant *yaqona* and *dalo*, my own.

But, what I am saying here, Honourable Speaker, we love to talk about the good things but we must also remember that a significant element of our youth get left behind. I have mentioned a few, let us take time to look at them. In the good spirit and the best spirit of equal citizenry, let us look at our youth legitimately and honestly, and as I had said I will come back to my report.

I just want to quote the Honourable Leader of National Federation Party (NFP), Honourable Professor Biman Prasad, when he repeatedly emphasised:

“Throughout history, it has always been the young people who had the passion, who had the courage and who are worried about social justice.”

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, what do our youth need? Our youth need social justice and they need economic opportunities as well. Our youth are tired of being talked down to. Our youth must be directly involved in strategies to improve their lives, not being told about how to live their lives.

Therefore, Honourable Speaker, I recommend that Government should convene a National Youth Summit, with a wide range of youth representatives and this summit should develop strategies focussed on education, employment and enterprise, so that they can all be involved in going forward. It is not that what you just organised, Honourable Minister, we are talking about a true youth summit to capture this.

Our youth should be encouraged, Honourable Speaker, to ascend to leadership in the community in sports, social events, health and environmental awareness. This will soon be their country, and we must help them save it. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I wish to also contribute to that debate which is the Review of the Ministry of Youth 2016 Annual Report.

I was hoping that my good friend, the Honourable Minister for Youth, will speak after all these because there are many questions that we want to put on the floor that he should answer. And normally he is “Mr. Fix it”, I call him “Mr. Fix it”, because he is the only one in the Government side who fixes things. When the infrastructure was down and there were potholes, he was assigned to it as Minister for Infrastructure and he fixed our potholes. As soon as he came out, Honourable Usamate, came in then we see potholes.

(Laughter)

But, I do not think he will be able to fix this, the youth. I feel that he has lost his battery, his battery has gone flat. The Ministry of Youth to me, Honourable Speaker, is like a boat with no captain and no radar, it goes round and round.

And he will confirm that even now, he is still looking for a policy, he is still looking for that National Youth Plan to apply, and we are sitting (all of us) suffering. As an example in Buca Bay, Natewa Bay, I think also in Kadavu, they do not mix home brew now. They just pick up their phone and call the carriers in Savusavu to deliver their beer. For that, it cost about \$200, it is because they have the money. They are rural billionaires, but they do not know what to do with it because we do not have a National Policy. Where is the National Policy to address their needs? There is nothing.

The Honourable Minister is still looking after 13 years, what to do with that? The youth who crowd up the market at 5.00 a.m. on Sunday mornings is also a sign that we lack direction, we do not have direction. There is nothing there.

Honourable Ro Tuisawau referred to our Sevens Team not properly dressed because we have nothing. We do not have a policy. There is another one; Eileen Cikamatana. She left our country because we could not accommodate her. There is too much politics, so where are all these directions? Where is the policy? We are still looking for the policy to address all these and in the report, they outline three recommendations.

The first one states, strengthening partnership with key stakeholders. It says that the Ministry of Youth is so far fulfilling their partnership with the Ministry of Health, RFMF, Fiji Corrections Service and the Police Force. What about the other departments? What about the faith-based, what about all other areas of youth and what about the *vanua*? We need all of these because we do not have a proper direction, we do not have a proper guideline and we will continue to face these problems.

There is another recommendation, the second one which recommends providing financial assistance to trained youth. So basically they are asking for more budgetary allocations. I agree totally, can we please allocate more funds to the Ministry of Youth, but with directions please. We do not want to waste it because if you do not have a policy, if you do not have a guideline, all that money will be wasted.

The third recommendation is to setup a benchmark like the Tutu Rural Training Centre. The Tutu model has been looking down at us for the last thirteen years. We have a locally grown model, why have not we had other Tutu's, why is there not any Tutu in Ra, what about in Navosa?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Hear, hear!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The example is there, it is locally grown. It is not imported from overseas, it works and it is Fiji made.

As an example, if you go to a village and if there is a student there from Tutu, you will see that he has his *yaqona* plant, he might be running a business and he has a house, compared to others who did not go through that training, they just drink, drink, drink, telephone Savusavu and get the carrier to deliver their beer. So there is a need for training and the model is staring right at us. Thirteen years and nothing is being done. So the Government must not, and what it is doing, it is doing it all alone.

(Laughter)

Now, when the Honourable Minister was Minister for Education, what did he achieve?

(Laughter)

Academic results going down despite all the freebies, despite the free bus fare, despite the capital projects. Results, outputs going down and down and down.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- He is the former Minister, I should ask the Prime Minister to sack him because this is a problem.

(Laughter)

We have the solution right before our very eyes. We should work with the *vanua*, we should work with the faith-based organisations, we should work with all stakeholders and do what Honourable Tikoduadua suggested; a national summit, so that you can also take our ideas. You do not have the ideas, you have the wrong ideas.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister Vuniwaqa, you have the floor. This is the last speaker.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I would like to make a very short contribution in relation to the work of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and commend them for the great work that they are doing in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal Target 5 in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I noted from the Report that they have a strategic direction in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women and have tangible results to show in that area. I cannot personally vouch for that as the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation that about two years ago where we partnered with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in carrying out carpentry skills training with not only young men but young women as well in those villages that were ravaged by *TC Winston* and therein, we are not only creating a livelihood avenue for these young women but we are also breaking glass ceilings as we do it.

I would really like to commend the work of the Ministry in that regard and I also note from the Report that it is something that is there on the ground about the, maybe lack of interest of young girls to join youth clubs. I know it is work in progress for the Ministry of Youth to do this and we are happy to help in that regards as well, to encourage our young girls to join youth clubs and to take advantage of the initiatives and programmes that the Ministry comes up with in relation to their empowerment.

I note also, Honourable Speaker, that the Ministry is undertaking programmes and initiatives not only in relation to gender but also in relation to persons living with disabilities and this is indeed a noble aim and I am happy to see that they have tangible results to show there as well. As a stakeholder in the empowerment programmes that the Ministry of Youth carries out, we are always willing to work with them in achieving our common interests in relation to women and also persons living with disabilities, Honourable Speaker.

In relation to the Tutu Model, I had the opportunity to visit Tutu last week and indeed it is a model that we can all admire and I fully support the recommendation made by the Standing Committee in that regards, having seen for myself what the young women attending that particular training centre have been able to achieve through skills training. I know that there are other stakeholders out there that are already doing empowerment programmes in relation to youths, not

only women but also those living with disabilities, males and females and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for the empowerment programmes that they carry out for those groups that are usually left behind in development. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Chair, you have your Right of Reply.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. Honourable Speaker, Sir, I would just like to thank the Permanent Secretary and all the officials of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. I believe there are a lot of opportunities for our youths in Fiji. During their presentation and recently our Committee has also visited the Valelevu Youth Training Centre, it was also an eye-opener for me.

The training there, the learning environment, the discipline amongst the youths and also the opportunities and the pathways and the youth have gone through the Fiji Corrections Service, some have been employed by the Fiji Police Force and the Republic of Fiji Military Forces as well. Some have their own bands now and they have their own businesses.

The Committee was also in Savusavu and I believe our officials from the Ministry of Youth and Sports are really doing well as far as providing the relevant instruments to address the issues of our youths in Fiji. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

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

(Chorus of “Noes”)

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

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the Honourable Alvick Maharaj to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE – PERFORMANCE AUDITS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER, 2014 (VOLUME 1)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Honourable Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on Performance Audit for the year ended 31st December, 2014, Volume 1, which was tabled on 18th May, 2018.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee of on Public Accounts to speak on the motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker Sir, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament.

Sir, as the Chairperson of the current Public Accounts Standing Committee to move the motion, I take this opportunity to speak on the motion on the review made by the Public Accounts

Committee on the Performance Audit for the year ended 31st December, 2014 which was tabled in Parliament on 18th May, 2018. Overall, it was noted that the Report was for the year ended 31st December, 2014 and the issues noted may not be current. It was pleasing to note that as of to-date most of the issues that were identified in the Report have either been resolved or is in the process of being addressed by these entities.

Honourable Speaker Sir, the Report covered the entities which appeared before the Public Accounts Committee and these included the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations, Ba Town Council, Lami Town Council, Lautoka City Council, Nadi Town Council, Nausori Town Council, Suva City Council, Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Environment, Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport and the Ministry of Economy.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, the Performance Audit was conducted pursuant to Section 6(a) of the Audit (Amendment) Act 2006 which allows the Auditor-General to carry out performance audits. The objective of the Performance Audit is to determine whether the State entity was achieving its objective effectively, economically and efficiently and in compliance with the relevant Act.

First for the Performance Audit on the National Employment Centre which highlighted the effectiveness of the National Employment Centre (NEC) and the employment creation services that the Ministry of Employment had offered to fulfil Government's vision on sustainable employment. At this juncture, the Ministry of Employment is commended with its progress in providing employment creation services to all unemployed through the NEC.

However it would be prudent for the Ministry of Employment to take serious consideration on the Committee's recommendation and address the issues that affects the governance framework which would boost NEC's primary objective and that is on employment creation and improvement on productivity level.

Secondly, for the Performance Audit on the Contractual Engagement by the respective Municipal Councils, it is important for all the municipal councils that were audited to have Contractual Agreements documented to cover all its performance, engagements and activities. Also it is important for these Municipal Councils to work closely with its line Ministry which is the Ministry of Local Government to have a standard policy guideline in place across the board.

Thirdly, on the Performance Audit of Management of Multilateral Environment Agreements. Based on the Committee's recommendations, it is important that the Department of Environment prioritises the issues raised as some may have already been addressed internally.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, on the Performance Audit of the Management of Rural Electrification Programme (REP). REP is a rural empowerment programme where the Government through the Department of Energy fully funds rural electrification projects for their communities. Given the Public Accounts Committee's recommendations, it is important for the Department of Energy to review all these recommendations and take serious consideration of those recommendations that are relevant to their current business process of REP.

Finally, the Performance Audit on Public Debt Management is, focused on the Determination of Public Borrowing Needs and Public Debt Reporting. Public debt management in Government is a collaborative effort amongst all Government entities and relevant key stakeholders, with the Ministry of Economy as the key agency responsible overall. The audit centres on the Ministry of Economy as a focal Ministry responsible for administering borrowing on behalf of the Government.

It is important that those Committee recommendations on the determination of public borrowing needs are considered as measures in its future undertakings for the Debt Management Unit.

Honourable Speaker Sir, to conclude I sincerely commend the effort of the previous Public Accounts Committee members in the compilation of this Report that is before the House. We acknowledge these entities responses to the Public Accounts Committee and look forward to these entities considering the Committee's recommendations positively in moving to the future, and further to continue to strive for the better in advancing its service delivery to meet the demands of all internal and external stakeholders.

Honourable Speaker Sir, with those comments, as the Member moving the motion on this Public Accounts Committee Report, I thank you for this opportunity.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Chairman. Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I would like to contribute briefly to the motion. There are five entities that were scrutinised in this Report namely:

1. National Employment Centre;
2. Municipal Councils;
3. Environmental Agreements;
4. Rural Electrification Programme; and
5. Public Debt.

At the outset, I think it is a total shame for Government to allow the management of these entities to sink below the level that the Report pointed out.

In relation to the National Employment Centre it is like putting something to a crowd and asking them, "Do this work", without even training them. That is the outcome of what the auditors are telling us, people who do not know what to do, managers who do not know their job, same also for the municipal councils. We heard here that our Government was jumping up and down saying that we do not need election. Election breeds corruption and they have managed to correct that in the last 13 years but this Report proves them wrong in relation to the management of contractual engagement.

On an Environmental Agreements, it puts shame on us as President of COP 23. We have all these international conventions but we are not implementing them. So, basically it a shame on Government. The first item is even the Report of the Chairman. He says and to quote him: "I welcome the opportunity to showcase the progress of Government entities."

This is not progress. This is dragging us backwards. I will go through some of the examples. In the NEC, this is the findings of the Auditor's Report. Seven regulations have been developed as required by the NEC but were not implemented, not passed. I am sure the Minister for Youth will have an opportunity after this and he will be able to tell us whether all those regulations have been passed, as well as the other issues that they raised. For example, the NEC Board since 2011 has not been having the required number of meetings. So, what kind of managers are these? What is the purpose of the Board if they do not meet? Then it says:

"The establishment of the seven employment services is still awaiting implementation. The required number of staffing for NEC endorsed by Cabinet has not

eventuated. NEC has not been effective in engaging strategic partners, etc. Identification cards are not issued to the unemployed persons who have been registered.”

So, what is the purpose of establishing NEC when you cannot have stakeholders or our customers or clients get registered? What is the use?

NEC was not able to meet their 2012 awareness target and conduct awareness for tertiary institutions. The Centre has not been able to conduct the list regulated throughout all centres. The unavailability of suitable venue has been a major hindrance and further the Centre has not prepared quarterly or bi-annual performance under any given legislations. So, audit was not able to ascertain however reports from two agencies as services were managed by NEC or not.

There were even errors in the performance update of certain activities of the NEC. So, I say “Shame on you, you should be happy with your head”, and this is your initiative. It is not something that you acquired from the previous Government, this is your initiative and look at it.

“Audit also found that the NEC selection or engagement of counsellors are vetted and scrutinised by the MLIRE Executive Managers and endorsed by the Permanent Secretary.

In addition, audit noted from reports submitted by the consultant that NEC needs more proper planning in the organising and scheduling of counselling sessions.

They do not know what they are doing. They just had this, put it up and they put employees there and said, “Do this”, this is what the Report is saying, and “Databases cannot generate a NEC Registration number automatically.”

Even worse, you see the need to have identifications for clients and employed people but they do not have the proper database or the software cannot work, it cannot do it. The Recommendations are there to address those so we hope that all of these had been resolved.

Honourable Speaker, going to the “Contractual Engagements by Municipal Councils.” These were the findings:

“None of the Councils visited have developed a policy governing the management of contractual engagements”

Very basic. So how do you manage all those contracts, how do you monitor; how did they monitor performance if you do not even have a policy governing the management of contractual engagements?

- “Generally, records maintained on activities relating to contractual engagements need to be improved. There is also a need to separate parties currently involved in the evaluation.
- Most of the councils do not have detailed planning as such as done by the Suva City Council to key contractual engagements. Nausori Town Council did not have an engineer and Head of the Health to provide technical input.
- Responsibility of tender evaluations and approving tenders are not separated.”

So conflict.

- “Most of the Councils did not have evaluation criteria to evaluate the tender proposals.
- Contractual agreements did not incorporate key items.
- Existing contracts approaching expiry term were not reviewed prior to their renewal.

- Contractual agreements were not vetted by a solicitor in some Councils.
- Documentation of contractual activities was generally lacking.
- Internal controls in the payment of contractors were lacking in some Councils.”

Honourable Speaker, allow me to go on to the Management of Multilateral Environmental Agreements. I am saying that it has put a shame on us, as President of COP23, to be managing this, to be agreeing to this without implementing it, and this concerns a number of Conventions:

- Convention on Biological Diversity;
- Cartagena Protocol on Bio Safety;
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) of wild fauna and flora;
- RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands;
- Vienna Convention on the protection of the ozone layer;
- Montreal Protocol substance that deplete the ozone layer; and
- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

All these relate very closely to the environment and to our role as advocate for climate change. But just listen to how we have managed this.

Absence of Standard Operating Procedures - there were no operating procedures in implementing these Conventions. There is an example here: “For instance, the 2012 RAMSAR national report on COP11 meeting in Romania disclosed that the absence of specific legislation for RAMSAR Convention has duly led to the deterioration in the national State of Fiji’s only wetland site.

So it is very sad and we should hold our head in shame, we go to the international community and say “we advocate climate change” but locally, we are doing nothing. We acquire this Conventions, we agreed to it but we are not passing the necessary legislation, we are not implementing them.

There were no Standard Operating Procedures in place for eight of the ten agreements. So for all those, there were no Standard Operating Procedures. And even worse, diversion of funds provided in the implementation of the Stockholm Convention. So there was fund allocated but it was diverted. So, where is climate change? And basically, I just want to say that I hope and I pray that all these things would be addressed or have been addressed.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Jone Usamate, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I would like to thank the Honourable Niko Nawaikula for making me responsible for all the potholes in Fiji.

I just want to speak to some of the Recommendations on Page 101. They relate to the Management Framework of the Rural Electrification Programmes.

First of all, I would like to say “thank you” to the Honourable Members of the Committee that highlight those issues that they have found that need to be improved and it is always a continual improvement process, the work of all these Committees that take on a legislative role. I will just go through some feedback on some of the Recommendations that we have here from Page 101.

In particular, the first is about five recommendations of the Management Framework of Rural Electrification Programme. So in relation to the 1st Recommendation, there has been in fact been a

review done for the Rural Electrification Unit Policy that was in place in 1993. That review took place in 2016.

There have been a number of amendments that have been made to that policy, including the waiver of community contributions that used to be a part of this, the removal of financial assistance for diesel scheme recipients making them eligible for electrification via renewable-based technologies, like solar home systems because Government's intent while we have two major aims in terms of electricity:

1. make sure that everyone in the country has access to some form of electricity by the year 2021;
2. by the year 2030, to make sure that most of these energy is turned away from fossil fuel-powered energy to renewable energy; and
3. an increase in the Fiji Electricity Authority or now EFL Annual Rural Electrification Fund there has been that increase, there has been also the increase in the validity or the FEA or the EFL Rural Electrification Scheme quotations and the handover of solar home systems ownership and maintenance to communities and recipients.

However, even before the review was carried out in 2016, there were some amendments done to certain clauses of the policy, such as the review of the community contribution from 10 percent to 5 percent in 2018.

In addition, the policy is also promoting the use of renewable energy to replace the use of diesel generators in our remote and outer island communities. There have been many cases where we have diesel generators, we are trying to establish hybrid systems where there is solar and diesel work in hand-in-hand.

The Department has also reviewed their Standard Operating Guidelines to make it more relevant, to workable and to harmonise with the changes and amendments of the policy.

In relation to Recommendation 2, talking about the staffing and the structure of the Unit, the Department has been in existence for more than 20 years which has a staffing in place and to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the project, the Department has now transferred three of its Technical Officers to be based with the Divisional Engineer (Works) Western and the Divisional Engineer (Works) North so that they can be on ground and they can monitor rural electrification.

The decentralisation of these services will also allow easy access to the area of operations so that they can see what is going on, monitoring and make changes where they need to be done. This will in turn improve service delivery to our rural customers and attend to their issues and queries in a more timely and efficient manner with the least turnaround time.

For Recommendation No. 3, the Department in terms of training of staff, like other Departments, we undertake a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) of the staff relative to what they are supposed to do and what they supposed to achieve. TNA is done on each individual staff and the Unit as a whole. This is coordinated together with the Ministry. Training programmes are organised locally or they may also attend training overseas. These trainings can range from technical, managerial and even in terms of Government policies, systems and processes. All of these training programmes are designed to enhance the effectiveness of the Unit.

In terms of remuneration, the Job Evaluation Exercise (JER) that was conducted has also reviewed the remuneration of our staff looking after rural electrification.

The Department, through its annual work programmes intends to complete all the approved projects for the current financial year. However, in cases where projects implementation are delayed, proper approvals are sought with the Ministry for Economy, to roll over remaining funds to the following financial year, because we have quite tight targets that we need to address. As I had mentioned before, the 2021 target of providing access to electricity for everyone in the country.

The second part of the Recommendations on Page 102 in relation to administration and implementation of rural electrification programmes, for Recommendation No. 1, even though some applicants fail to provide the full documentation in their application, but these are always verified and scrutinised by our officers before the project proceeds to the next stage of its implementation. And as part of the process, our technical officers carry out site survey to confirm and authenticate the details of the applicant and assess the viability of the mode of electricity supplied.

For Recommendation No. 2, the comments from the Ministry is that, yes, one of the main challenges faced with the use of diesel generator is the high cost of fuel. Sometimes, they cannot pay for the fuel so the generator does not function.

Also, there is probably a lack of maintenance schedule and improper management of the project. This has also been a contributing factor for some of these generator plants.

As part of its implementation plan, the Department continues to train the village generator operators and electrification committee on all aspects of the project, including repair and maintenance, record keeping and overall management of the project.

For Recommendation No. 3, the Department has put in place a stringent and transparent monitoring process, to ensure that materials and equipment supplied or installed at the site comply with the standards as per the agreement contract. Some of the components or parts installed may not be listed in the policy, but most of these will not affect the operation of the system and when this happens, if it does not impact on the operation of the system, it will not constitute a variation.

The Department has been working with committees and with the post officers in the rural communities on the collection of the monthly rental fees. And in addition, some communities prefer to make their payments to the post officers, which is then paid and reconciled with our Ministry Accounts Team.

For Recommendation No. 4, most of the communities have made partial payment on their community contributions. When the Government made a decision in 2016 to meet the upfront cost of all rural electrification projects, most of these communities were refunded back on their contributions, so whatever money they have paid was given back to them. Today, there are no outstanding payments to be recovered by Government.

On Recommendation No. 5, the Department is working together with the Fiji Renewable Energy Power Projects, funded by the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) to develop the database that was mentioned in this Recommendation. We have to develop a database for the Department and the development of this database will address issues of security of records, and also the availability of reports and updates, as and when required.

And the last two Recommendations, Mr. Speaker, Sir, on Page 103 of the Report, Recommendation No. 1, when staff are engaged on inspection trips they are provided with inspection guideline as per the terms and conditions of agreement. However, there are instances when contractors install substandard beds which are not specified in the contract agreement. The Department has addressed and rectified most of these issues with the contractors and penalties are

imposed, if contractors do not comply with the terms and conditions of engagement. This includes but it is not limited to withholding the release of their payment for that particular stage of the work.

Secondly, before the release of any contractual payment, it is a requirement that the Department carries out the inspection for that particular stage of work.

Finally, due to the geographical locations of our islands and communities, it is always a challenge for us to monitor the progress of projects on the ground on a timely basis.

The Department is looking at its staffing to beefing up this staff structure and also apart from the existing fleet, Government has also approved the purchase of two four-wheeled drive vehicles which we should be getting in December. One of the vehicles will be based in the Northern Division and one in the Central Division, and this will assist us to service those projects in the interior which are inaccessible or those in the rugged terrain.

The decentralisation of our officers to the Division will complement the Department's intention to closely monitor our projects on the ground.

That, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is just an update on some of the developments that have been taking place on the Recommendations that relate to rural electrification. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Radrodro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I would like to make a short contribution on the Report that is before us, especially on the five entities that had been given special audit attention by the Auditor-General.

The Recommendations of the Committee is that, there will be a follow up audit on all those five entities and I acknowledge the progress that has been highlighted by the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure and I hope that you would also comment on some of the issues that had been highlighted under NEC.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the intent of setting up the NEC was considered in 2009 as the best way forward to cost effectively address the unemployment problem in the country. And this audit was conducted in good timing to see and ascertain the extent and effectiveness of the NEC in the Employment Creation Services in implementing Government's vision.

Again, as I had highlighted yesterday, this is another baby of Government that had been highlighted in the Audit Report which had not performed to its expected intension or vision. The audit was conducted in 2014, it was tabled in 2015, interview was conducted in 2017, the Report was again tabled in 2018 and now we are discussing it in 2019. During that period, the highlights of these findings by the Auditor-General continued to be accepted by the relevant Ministries that have been highlighted here.

It started with the legislation, Mr. Speaker, Sir. When they set up the NEC, the Regulations were yet to be approved and it begs the question, who is the Minister responsible for this delay in this Regulations? There are seven of them, as has been highlighted by the Honourable Nawaikula, but at the time of the interview, all those Regulations were yet to be gazetted by the relevant line Minister. And it is very concerning that these simple exercises of registering the Regulations in the Gazette had not been done and I hope to see that this be improved as we go forward.

On the composition of the Board of the NEC, it has been highlighted that majority of the Permanent Secretaries were members of this Board, the Permanent Secretary for:

- Finance and National Planning;
- Public Service Commission;
- Education;
- Social Welfare;
- Business and Commerce;
- Agriculture; and
- Lands.

Also included were the General Manager, iTaukei Land Trust Board; the four Divisional Commissioners; and representative from the youths, employers, workers, vocational institutions and other persons. There were about 20 of them in the make-up of the NEC Board, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The concern is that, the number of times they met, it looks like they do not have the time to uphold this policy in terms of generation of the activities of NEC, so they can meet and monitor how the administration of the NEC has been undertaken throughout the years from 2009 until to-date.

I fail to see the Permanent Secretary for Women and Permanent Secretary for Youth included in this Board makeup. Just this morning, we were discussing about investment, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I would like to commend the work of a gentleman, who set up the Fijian Elections Office (FEO) App that majority of Honourable Members were accessing during and after the Election period.

If you look into your respective phones, you press the App now, the message there says, “Oops, sorry, it is not working.” I begin to question what has the Government done to ensure that this makeup by this gentleman, Mr. Vijendra Singh, who developed this App on his own, improves on this creativity? It looks like the Government has done nothing at all in terms of assisting this gentleman. He has created an App but no assistance from the Government.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- I know he is an employee of FEO, but what assistance have you given him so that he can further his knowledge, his creativity?

If you look at your FEO App, it says it is not working. So that is intellectual theft or intellectual property that this gentleman has created over the period.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of contractual engagements by Municipal Councils. If you allow me, I will just go through some of the major issues that are highlighted in the Report. The functions or the purpose of the audit was to ensure to check whether the systems of governance in terms of the contractual arrangements within the respective Municipalities are working properly. But what the auditors have come up with is that, most anomalies were highlighted in respective Municipalities. I hope that respective Municipalities will improve on its performances.

Another point that I also wish to highlight is that, all these happened during the time of the Special Administrators and the CEOs. From this side of the House, we have always been advocating to hold Municipal Elections, seeking the Government to undertake the Municipal Elections. This is one proof that even in this special arrangement of Special Administrators and Chief Executive Officers, still there was no improvement. But the important thing, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that, this is ratepayers’ funds. Ratepayers are funding the Municipalities so they need to have a say on how their rates (monies) have been utilised by respective Officials in Municipal Councils.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the issue of management of Multilateral Environment Agreement. I was looking forward to see some update from the respective line Minister in terms of the recommendations that are there on the management of Multilateral Environment Agreement, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

There are about seven or eight Recommendations and we anticipate that the relevant line Minister will give us an update in terms of this specific area.

We appreciate the update from the line Minister for Infrastructure and Transport but there is one thing that also needs to be highlighted, the solar energy implementation. There are a lot of requests or applications given to the line Ministry for solar implementation. I would like to mention about the application for Roma Village. They have been there for the last five years and they are still awaiting for the solar to be installed in their village.

Also, Mr. Speaker Sir, on the rural electrification, we appreciate the Rural Electrification Programme that has been undertaken but there is also an issue when there is a hurricane or disaster the black wires that connect from the main grid to the respective households, that still is the responsibility of the poor villagers in the respective villages. They have to go and look for contractors who usually charge at a minimum rate, \$500. These are the rates and charges that the contractors usually levy the home owners in the village settlements and I hope the contractors and the relevant ministries will ensure....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... black wire

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- It is a black wire. It is a black wire.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- It is a black wire that the respective owner is paying during times of disasters when it is cut off. You have to go there and see for yourselves.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you Mr. Speaker Sir. I hope the Honourable Minister for Economy would also spend time to ensure that the respective legislations are gazetted on time.

As we go on to the recommendations on the public debt management. This is a hot topic that we have always talked about, Mr. Speaker Sir.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- It is hot because it is the reality, it has doubled since 2006 and we hope that you would provide us an update on the recommendations that are there. There are only 4 recommendations, so please take note of the recommendations that are there and provide us....

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Read it, read the recommendations.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- I will wait for your direction, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- You have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- There are only four Recommendations and probably the Honourable Minister can give us an update on the recommendations. They are:

1. Introduce strategies that will reduce the total debt to GDP ratio (that is what the Auditor-General has recommended) and maintain it below the 40 percent GDP threshold as required for developing economies such as Fiji.
2. Be more prudent and thorough in its assessment of submission from stakeholders during the budget formulation as outcomes of all submissions from stakeholders determine the budget deficit and consequently Government borrowing needs.
3. Ensure that the budget system focusses more on reducing the variance between the estimated and actual budget so that the fiscal deficit is kept at a minimum level.
4. Make adequate provisions during the budget process for its debt servicing cost.

Those are only four recommendations, Mr. Speaker Sir, that has been highlighted by the Auditor-General's Office and we hope that the responses from the respective line Ministers that have been highlighted, there are five of them, will give us a proper update before the Auditor-General will continue another follow-up audit to see how far we have progressed from this Report to the next Audit Report. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- The Honourable Premila Kumar you have the floor.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker Sir, thank you for this opportunity to speak on the Report. That is precisely what I want to do, I want to give you an update of how we have progressed from 2014 till now. So, my response to the Report refers to the Sections on Contractual Engagements by Municipal Councils on Pages 22 to Pages 63.

The first set of recommendations deals with the policy framework, governing contractual engagements where it was recommended that all Councils should have a documented contract policy in place to assist in managing contractual engagements. This would include the development of standard policy guidelines and the review of the 1992 Manual of Accounts.

My Ministry is acknowledging the audit findings from 2014 and the recommendations by the Public Accounts Committee. As a result of the Auditor-General's recommendations from 2014, tender award procedures have been established and all agreements are legally vetted by the Legal Practitioner hired by the Municipal Councils. In some cases where Councils have difficulties in hiring a Legal Practitioner, assistance is also sought from the Office of the Solicitor-General.

The Ministry has also established a Standard Policy Guideline and Tender Processes to assist Municipal Councils to manage contracts.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to advise that a draft Manual of Accounts is currently being evaluated by the Ministry of Economy to ensure compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standard (IPSAS). Currently all Councils are using IFRS system for reporting of their financials.

In 2016 a revised procurement ceiling was also put in place for spending levels to strengthen procurement processes. The Draft New Manual of Account includes risk management and risk assessment of all contractual activities.

To strengthen oversight from 2017, all major capital works from Municipal Councils are supervised by the construction implementation unit.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, may I ask you to pause there while we follow Standing Orders and move a suspension motion.

Honourable Members, for the purposes of complying with 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.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Honourable Speaker, 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 4.30 p.m. today to complete the remaining items as listed in today's Order Paper.

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

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. We are about to complete items as listed on Schedule 1 and of course Schedule 2 as well and thus the request for the extension of sitting beyond 4.30 p.m. today. *Vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- Are there any Members wishing to contribute to this? I now call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament to speak in reply.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- I have no further comments to make, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, 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 4.30 p.m. to complete the remaining items as listed on today's Order Paper.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of "Noes")

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

Honourable Members, it is now 4.34 p.m. I will suspend the sitting now so that we can have afternoon tea break. On our return, the Honourable Minister will continue with her contribution. We adjourn for afternoon tea.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.35 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 5.05 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please be seated. We will continue with the motion and I give the floor to the Honourable Minister. You have the floor, Madam.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The second set of recommendations in the Report relate to key elements of contractual engagements. The specific recommendations have been made around capacity building of staff, contract inventory, tender award procedures, maintaining proper records, procedures for payment of contractors, qualified technical staff and tender evaluation criteria.

In response, I acknowledge that there are deficiencies in the capacity of Councils to manage contracts and my Ministry has been taking action to rectify this. All Councils have been instructed to build staff capacity in regards to managing contracts. My Ministry has also offered training to the Councils in the areas of procurement and tendering procedures.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, my Ministry in 2017 developed and disseminated a standard policy guideline for all Municipal Councils, just to ensure transparent processes and ethical practices are used when scrutinising contractors. Tender evaluation criteria have been developed as part of the review in 2017 and are now incorporated in the Tender Evaluation and Selection Process.

The Ministry is monitoring this process closely via spot audits where Councils are required to send all their tender evaluation reports to the Ministry for scrutiny before Councils approve any tenders. The Ministry is, however, aware of the need to improve work in this area by strengthening internal audit capacity as part of its reform agenda.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the final set of recommendations deals with managing contractors' performance. Specifically the Public Accounts Committee has recommended that a policy on the monitoring of contractors work and evaluating contractual engagement be developed, together with ensuring proper documentation of complaints.

My Ministry has adopted two national monitoring policies in regards to capital projects and has established a Service Charter for Councils in 2017 which includes monitoring of service delivery by Municipal Councils and annual assessment by the Ministry of Local Government.

That is all I have to say, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Unfortunately again, Honourable Nawaikula is not here, Mr. Speaker, Sir. He has this rhetoric of saying that we are doing nothing. I hope that the Report that I presented now shows that we are working in the direction of improving the systems and processes. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Bala, you have the floor.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I acknowledge with appreciation the work and findings of the Committees on my Ministry. My Ministry has addressed five of the 12 Recommendations to date. While the remainder are work-in-progress. Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the information of this House, Recommendations 5, 7, 9, 10 and 12 have been completed. I would like to assure this august House that by the end of this year, we will complete all the balance of seven recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the National Employment Centre was established in 2010 to provide social justice to unemployed persons with the provision of skills as well as facilitate towards sustainable

employment. The primary objective is to grow employment and improve productivity through improved governance frameworks. The idea was to consolidate all the employment-creation agencies into a “one stop” service for all unemployed. This is similar to the “one stop shop” that we were talking about earlier on.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the NEC is part of the Government’s response to address the Millennium Development Goal 1. The National Employment Centre offers four main services, namely:

1. Formal Employment Services which looks after the local employment, including work attachment;
2. Foreign Employment Services which looks after the foreign employment opportunities;
3. Fiji Volunteer Service which looks after the volunteer placements, including the placement of professional retired workers; and
4. Self-Employment Service which looks after the SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from 2010 the National Employment Centre’s major achievements todate are as follows:

1. To conduct specific trainings to the registered unemployed such as counselling services, live skills and employment skills training;
2. Placement of work attaches in workplaces under the MOU with employers and the payment of allowances; and
3. Increase of work attachment allowance from the original of \$60 per week across-the-board to \$100 for the Diploma and Certificate holders and \$120 for the Degree holders.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for placement of volunteers locally, including the:

- Placement of retirees to regional volunteers, in particular, the teachers and the nurses.
- Placement of registered clients into permanent local employment opportunities.
- Placement of seasonal foreign work opportunities, in particular, in New Zealand and Australia.
- Establishment of the National Employment Centre Board that governs the overall administration of NEC.
- Provision of technical assistance through the South-South Corporation for regional countries.
- Launching of the National Employment Policy as part of the Ministry’s Five-Year Development Plan 2018-2023.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the major action items from the National Employment Policy todate includes the recent launching of the School of Employment Exposure Programme as well as the national job fair and the recently signed of the Pacific Labour Scheme with the Australian Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, my Ministry, through the National Employment Centre will continue to improve our systems and process and to work hand-in-hand with our stakeholders to grow employment opportunities, beginning with working in clear collaboration and sharing resources with other Ministries. Sir, we cannot do this alone and we need everyone’s support to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there were three items that were raised by Honourable Niko Nawaikula. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier on that he is no more here, but someone will definitely pass on this message to him, please. In terms of regulation that he was harping on, Honourable Speaker, let me inform this honourable House that these seven regulations are for final vetting.

The other matter that was raised in place of the ID card at this point in time, the National Employment Centre is issuing a confirmation letter to all the customers registered, which has the date of registration and the ID Number. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are also in the process of doing ID Cards in the near future.

The other issue that was raised was on the Ministry's IT system and data. I wish to inform this House that the Ministry's IT team is currently working with the Government's ITC on our data system.

With those few comments and the update on the recommendation and finding, I thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Jese Saukuru, you have the floor.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I wish to make a short contribution to the motion before the House.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Committee for making their Report to Parliament today. My contribution will be on the management of NEC.

The following observations have been done by the Committee:

1. The functions of the NEC has become too broad which has led to the duplication of similar functions in different government agencies. There should be a clear demarcation of roles to maximise the use of limited resources. They are trying to carry additional responsibilities outside the initial mandate with our International Legislation, since it impinges on other agencies' core activities.
2. Lack of staff because the mandate is too broad.
3. NEC cannot make decisions for employers who have the right to employ who they think is the best person to recruit, and not NEC.
4. NEC should streamline its core functions to focus on registration and allow other agencies to carry out their own functions within their respective legislation.
5. There is a lack of monitoring mechanism in place to monitor the broad range of activities which are costly and cut across other agencies.

I said that I wish to talk on the fourth observation and that is on streamlining its core functions to focus on registration and allow other agencies to carry out their own functions within their respective legislation. I speak on the subject of recruitment for people to work overseas. There are employment agencies registered under NEC that have paid the bonds to that sum of \$20,000.

If they can be given the freedom to do their function, the NEC cannot play both the referee and a player in this scenario, we cannot compete with other agencies that are registered with them. If they can give that to other employment agencies to carry out that function while they do the policy work like this and observe and monitor that they are working within the respective legislation in place. That is all my contribution, and I thank the Minister for his contribution and I thank the Committee again. I support the motion before the House. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Minister Reddy, you have the floor.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Honourable Speaker, I just make a very quick intervention. This is in regards to the Multilateral Environmental Agreements. I do note that there are some comments made with regard to one lack of adequate specific legislations on that and lack of resources to fully implement those agreements.

Honourable Speaker, this Report was based on 2014, this is now about five years down the line and quite a lot of developments have taken place. We have three sections which looks after this term of multilateral agreements within the Department of Environment:

1. Section on Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS);
2. Section on Waste and Pollution; and
3. Section on Resource Management.

The agreement falls under these three sections, for example, the Convention on Biodiversity falls under the section on Resource Management, a Convention on Protected an Endangered Species falls again on the Resource Management section, the Agreement on Ozone Depleting Substance falls within the section on ODS, so these sections have strengthened and now we have got each of these three sections being headed by Principal Level Administrative Officers.

We have a total of six staff dealing specifically on multilateral environmental agreements. Of course, we are also supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which deals with any agreement between countries.

Honourable Speaker, since 2014, we had eight capacity-building programmes to develop the staff, their capacity to deal with the agreements and how the country will respond to ensuring that we adhere to the agreements that we have signed on.

As I alluded to earlier on that the comments made here that we do not have specific legislation does not necessarily have to be that way. There are legislations which cover these multilateral agreements, so I think it is not a right observation that has been made in this Report.

(Honourable Members interject)

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- I will give you the example, for example, the Convention on Biodiversity, it is captured in the legislation on Endangered and Protected Species Act 2002; Environmental Management Act 2005 to Fisheries Act 158, Forestry Decree 1992. So there are legislations and our staff understand this and use these legislation when dealing with these multilateral agreements.

Honourable Speaker, at the moment, we are to deal with Kigali Amendment, the legislation was approved by Cabinet and it will be tabled in Parliament at a later date, so with these words, I want to assure the House that the Department is actually growing, expanding, we are strengthening the Department but again, it cannot be done over time, it requires resources and it is being done in a progressive manner. Thank you.

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

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I will be very brief. I just wish to again add to the explanation that has already been given to us by the Honourable

Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Waterways, particularly concerning multilateral environmental agreement.

I just want to put this into context, Honourable Speaker, Sir, so that we can have a very good understanding of it. As clearly articulated in the Report, environmental issues entered the international agenda in the early 1970s.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, where were we in the 1970s? We were early in our infancy stage of our democracy and over the years, we have been developing slowly. I recall that the economy back then, our GDP was around \$200 million back in the 1970s. Then until the 1990s, we were just hitting \$2 billion, so you have to look at it in terms of capacities, in terms of finances, and the instruments that we can, so you cannot just be able to, one thing is ratification but to put the instruments in place is another.

I need to put this into context, Honourable Speaker, Sir, because this is something that has been passed on from Governments. In 1983, I cannot recall the name of the Report, Honourable Speaker, but the focus was on sustainable development, the three pillars of sustainable development:

- Economy;
- Environment; and the
- Social Implications.

The Brundtland Commission Report where sustainable development was defined in the United Nations as meeting the needs and aspirations of today without compromising the future.

Today, we have launched about SDGs. This started, Honourable Speaker, from the 1970s into the 1980s into the 1990s. Honourable Speaker, Sir, 1992 in Rio was when the United Nations had the resolution on the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) 1992, Honourable Speaker Sir, and just in 2015, we adopted the Paris Agreement. These things do not just happen overnight.

Although there may be in our legislations, we do not cover specifically some, but there are overlaps. Our environmental laws, we only had the Environmental Management Act in 2005 and then it was amended again in 2008. Imagine, Honourable Speaker, Sir, from the 1970s, into the 1980s and into the 1990s. So this is the story behind all these Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

Government is doing its best, again, based on the capacities of the economy, the technical expertise that we have and some of these are not only at the multilateral level, even multilateralism, Honourable Speaker, Sir, maybe the Secretary-General will tell us tomorrow, is under threat because some of the developed countries that initiated this have not even ratified, and for Fiji the ratification process is through Parliament. These are some of the factors that we need to take into consideration, Honourable Speaker, when we are talking about those issues. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. I will give the floor to the last Speaker, Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Just a few comments in respect of the Report but just also some general comments.

But before I do that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Tuisawau quoted Mick Beddoes, about Fiji not giving any funding for the Olympics. I have got the figures here. In fact, for the Rugby Sevens preparation and participation for Rio, the Fijian Government actually allocated \$3,070,248. We then

gave an additional \$700,000 to the Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee (FASANOC) for the preparation.

There are lots of other figures that we have given. They also may recall that the Fijian Government actually made a payment to the players when they had the huge parade at Albert Park. All of that money was given to them, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again Honourable Radrodro quoted the App not being available at this point in time as some kind of signal that we are not supporting the person who actually developed the App. That is a whole lot of nonsense. He should know that those kind of Apps are actually supported by a particular programme. That is supported by Microsoft. The FEO pays the licence to Microsoft.

There is a technical issue at the moment and it will be up and running in two weeks' time but, it does not in any way mean that, that person is not being supported and if you are still interested in results which you can get, please go to 2018.feo.org.fj. That is also available on the desktop. The results are still there and the results have not changed, that is why you are still there.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the other hand, I want to make some comments, what the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence highlighted, the issue about multilateralism, and he is absolutely right. If you look at most of these Conventions, they depend on a multilateral approach, that all the countries actually will be imposing these Conventions themselves domestically because there is no way that you can have the effects of this multilateral-based Conventions only applied by one or two countries. And as we do know at the moment, multilateralism is very much under threat. This is precipitated into things like trade wars and tariff wars, as being done. So he is absolutely correct in terms of ensuring that we have the capacity and there is also the capacity not just within one country but regionally and also internationally.

The other point that the Honourable Minister for Agriculture highlighted and again, I want reiterate because Honourable Nawaikula is a lawyer and should know this, that just because you have a Convention, it does not mean that the Clauses of the Convention is not applied just because you do not have a specific law under the name of that Convention.

We have ratified the ICCPR. We are not going to have a law called the ICCPR Act. You have the CEDAW, you do not have a CEDAW Act. We actually have various laws that actually give substance to the principles of CEDAW - the Domestic Violence Act, various other laws within the criminal procedure system within your criminal laws. They all complement the principles enunciated in that particular Convention. He should know that. The lawyers on the other side should know that.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYU.- It is not meandering! These are facts. Do not steal out terminology, please.

The reality is that, he picks up this Report and says, “No specific legislation”, big deal! He should look at the substance. He should look across the paragraph and see what it says.

It says, “The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.” It says, “No specific legislation”, then it says, “The convention is legislated through the Biosafety Promulgation 2008, Food Safety Act 2003, Customs Act No.11 of 1986, Customs Regulation 1986.” That is what supports the Convention.

Just because he has this listed out saying, “No specific legislation”, does not mean that the Convention has not been applied.

Very importantly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and just overall, they did talk about and unfortunately I was not here when the Honourable Minister for Local Government was giving her piece, the reality of the matter is, yes, there has been issues with Municipal Councils but those issues do not start when FijiFirst Government came in or the Bainimarama-led Government came in, but they have been a legacy issue.

We can pick up numerous reports and point out to you what used to happen. I can pick up numerous reports, some of the people who were advising you, who actually were in the Public Accounts Committee Reports previously as Deputy Permanent Secretaries, when the Ministry of Agriculture decided to get people into aquaculture and fish farming, they had their own farms updated whilst they were Deputy Permanent Secretaries. They should know that.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition should also know this because he was the Prime Minister then. Mr. Qarase was the Prime Minister then or he was honourable then when he was the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the reality of the matter is that the municipal councils ... this is why we need to apply the principles of OMRS across the board, recruiting the right people for the right positions. We have seen in Municipal Councils for numerous years where there are people who are appointed because they knew someone else, et cetera, so we need to change that.

Just getting back, Mr. Speaker Sir, on the issue pertaining to what the Honourable Aseri Radrodro raised about the Public Debt Management, and I would like to refer to him. I asked him to read it all out, and he read out the Recommendations but he perhaps, deliberately or unwittingly or wittingly, should read the paragraph below that. It says, I quote:

“...PAC noted that the Recommendations of the Auditor-General has been attended to by the Ministry of Economy and, therefore, no longer agrees with the recommendation.”

He did not read the line out.

We need to come to these discussions with clean hands, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and we need to come with intellectual honesty.

Mr. Speaker Sir, also the reality of the matter is that, there is prudent and effective management of public debt. We have organisations like the IMF, World Bank, ADB and ANZ, have all constantly been assessing our debt position and have attested that we are on a sustainable footing.

On the same note, Mr. Speaker Sir, as I have highlighted, we always have to remain vigilant in respect of what is happening globally, and how that can affect us - the slow growth in China, the trade war between USA and China and, of course, the effects of it on countries like Australia, who is our major trading partner and indeed, where we get most of our tourists from.

Mr. Speaker Sir, as has been highlighted, our debt to GDP ratio is currently 45.9 percent. The recent ADB Report and I, again, urge, I really urge Honourable Members of Opposition because it is quite apparent that they do not read. They really do not read!

You do not only read this. In order to be able to contribute, you need read the general literature around this. Please, go and read the recent ADB Report on debt sustainability. It is available on the website, it is available at the ADB Office, go and read that. Get your people who are writing your speeches to read that, the people who are giving you the so-called input.

There are six Pacific Island Countries that have been identified by the ADB, that are all deemed to be in high debt distress situations and Fiji is not one of them. Fiji, in fact, is doing a lot better than most of them. And if you look at our debt matrix, we have always maintained a permutation that 70 percent of our debt should be onshore, plus or minus five percent; 30 percent should be foreign debt. Why do we do that? It is because we do not want to be subject to foreign currency fluctuations. We maintained that.

Honourable Nawaikula, I have been told just recently, went on some diatribe on *Facebook*. Apparently, he said that the Fijian Government has molested FNPF. Molestation can only take place physically. No one is going to physically molest FNPF.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think because of the battering they received last night with all the facts, he went on this diatribe on FNPF on *Facebook*, completely misconceived, and I urge Honourable Members to read what he has put on FNPF, “Take it back! Bring it back to the workers,” not talking about whether they have the financial acumen to do it or not.

This is the kind of, sort of, postulating that takes place which is actually detrimental to the financial system in Fiji. And thank God they are on the other side!

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the Fiscal Sustainability Fund the Fijian Government with the assistance of the World Bank, carried out a Debt Sustainability Analysis in the financial year 2018-2019, and the findings revealed, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that Fiji’s nominal debt level remains sustainable, below the benchmark over the past five years. Debt to GDP is expected to remain below 50 percent for the next five years. GDP growth projections continue to reduce the public debt level as a percentage of GDP.

So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as has been highlighted in this particular part of the Report, the Recommendations are no longer applicable. I also want to refer the Honourable Members (they probably did not read this because it was not as attractive for them in particular for the other side), to Chapter 6 which is the Conclusion. And they actually refer to, in view of the magnitude of public investments that the Government entities represent, the importance of the services that they provide and the economic significance is quite important, supervision monitoring is carried out on GCCs and CSAs.

We have a Public Enterprises Bill which is coming before Parliament tomorrow to be debated and voted upon and, again, this is very critically important to understand, the kind of discipline that we are now putting in the public enterprises. That kind of discipline never existed previously, Mr. Speaker, Sir. And we hope that, that Bill will be approved. We have had the ADB work with us to ensure that we apply good governance standards, to be able to apply principles that will ensure, will not only get domestic confidence levels up but also private sector from outside increased.

The other point that I also wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the public entities today are performing far, far better than they ever did before. You look at Fiji Pine Ltd, Airports Fiji Limited, Fiji Ports Corporation Limited, the dividend payment, you look at Energy Fiji Limited, all of these figures we have enunciated.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on that part, I would just like to conclude, but one last point I want to make before I forget, apologies I just saw that now, that the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations highlighted about the ID cards. We are currently, as you know on digitalFiji Platform and, again, we are working on various portals, one of the aspects that we are currently looking at very seriously and they will be doing some studies done, is to introduce a National ID Card. To have a National ID Card, Mr. Speaker, Sir, will mean that everyone will have their ID card as their Primary Identification Number which would clear up a lot of the issues that we

currently have, whether it is health, employment, NEC, Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, Education, E-ticketing, NEC, everyone will have the ID card system.

We will have one primary ID card number and, of course, it will ensure that we are able to track the Minister for Health. If, for example, something goes to agriculture, start up some farming business, et cetera, the Minister for Health will know about that person when they go and see the Health Department, the Minister for Women will know exactly what is happening, the Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Education, Minister for Industry and Trade, and everyone will know what is actually happening. We will then be able to have better data collation, make better decisions, ensure that there is less leakage from the system, and this will ensure that we have real focussed issues in terms of providing services to our people.

So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Committee for this Report.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General. Chairperson of the Standing Committee, you have the floor on a Right of Reply.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, I have no further comments.

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

(Chorus of “Noes”)

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

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, the Honourable Alexander O’ Connor to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

REPORT ON PUBLIC PETITION TO REVIEW AND REDRESS ANOMALY IN POLICE BACK-PAY OF 2015

HON. A.D. O’CONNOR.- Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Report on the Public Petition for Parliament to review and redress the vast anomaly present in the recent Police Back-Pay out of 2015 which was tabled on 18th April, 2018.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Honourable Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence to speak to the motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A.D. O’CONNOR.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament, on behalf of the Honourable Members of the Committee, I take this opportunity to speak in support of the motion in regards to the debate on the above Committee Report, tabled previously by the former Chair. The gist of this Report reviews the Petition tabled on 24th August, 2015 requesting Parliament to scrutinise and redress the claims by retired police officers on alleged anomalies in the Police Job Evaluation Exercise (JEE) from 2004 to 2005 and resulting back-pay conducted in 2004.

The Petition was first referred by Parliament to the Standing Committee on Justice Law and Human Rights on 24th August, 2015. It was later referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence by the Honourable Speaker on 20th March. The Committee held its first meeting on 28th March, 2017 and agreed on a work plan that involved the call for oral and written submissions from affected parties and interested stakeholders.

A series of Committee hearings were conducted from 4th April, 2017 to 28th March, 2018. I commend the Committee and the efforts of the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Defence, National Security and Immigration and Fiji Police Force for the appointment of a taskforce in 2015 to initiate the process of pursuing the payment of the JEE.

The Fiji Police Force Accounts Department paid to police officers in 2015 for the years 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009 and 2012. The budget for JEE was \$28.5 million and the fund was under Head 50. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is anticipated that the recommendations made by the Committee has been actioned by Government, the relevant line Ministry and the Fiji Police Force and are addressed through appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with those few comments as a Member of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, I support the recommendations of the Report before the House and I thank you, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Chairperson. Honourable Bulitavu, you have the floor.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I rise to give my views on the motion which is before the House. First of all I would like to thank the Chairman and the current Committee for the tabling this very important Petition which was first brought to the House by a former Member of Parliament, Honourable Semesa Karavaki, with his discussions with some retired police officers who are members of the Association of Retired Police Officers.

I was also a member of the Committee that sat and deliberated on this Petition in the last Term of Parliament and the only Members of that Committee left in this new term of Parliament is the Honourable Ratu Matanitobua, Honourable Aseri Radroro (Alternate Member) and I. Unfortunately, Honourable Members of the other side did not return.

But to take us on few of the things that the Committee came to its findings, when the Petition came to the Committee, we first called the Fiji Police Force, the Force Accountant and the Deputy Force Accountant to explain on the various allegations made by the petitioners. And given that first discussion, the Committee moved on to call other submittees to hear from the signatories of the petition and also the various stakeholders involved.

The fact is that at the end of our deliberation, it was established that what was agreed by a Job Evaluation Exercise during the SDL Cabinet of 2004 where a 30 percent job evaluation payout was to be done, was not done according to the Cabinet decision. We had access to Cabinet Papers, the Cabinet Secretary then was Jowasa Volavola, then we also had documents on what the Committee compelled to commit to its attention from the various Cabinet decisions on this particular issue. Given that the association not only made presentation to the Committee, it also visited the Honourable Prime Minister in one occasion to raise this issue and they were directed to put it in the form in which the Committee were deliberating on.

The JEE was 30 percent and the decision of the Cabinet in 2004 that it was to be on a pro-rata basis where 6 percent is to be given on a yearly basis from 2004 to 2012. The payout was done in 2004, 2005, 2006, from the 2007 to the year 2012 no payment was done and that we all understand,

that is when the Bainimarama-led Government came in, so obviously there will be changes in systems and other priorities for the Police Force.

Although this was due to these officers and it only came to the attention of the Government in 2015 in a Cabinet Paper signed by the Secretary of Cabinet then Ms. Kiran probably she is still the Secretary that the 2015 Budget had approved an allocation for the shortfalls of that payout. So those that did not receive their Job Evaluation back-pay through the 2015 Cabinet decision, approved that there should be a budgetary allocation from Head 50 to cater for those anomalies. So anomalies had already been established.

The issue raised by these officers is that the money that came through the budgetary allocation did not reach them. When we moved around the country, most of the presenters came to say that they presented their bank statements and even some of them got only about \$300, and then bringing someone else who entered the Force in the same year on comparison, the other one got about \$6,000. So there was a big difference in this pay-out. Given that the Committee was faced with that, we actually had to call in the Auditor-General to clarify a few things after we had identified in one of the Audit Reports on some of the things that came up in regards to this allocation of the budget.

The Auditor-General made a very important finding for the Committee to note and his finding was that if you go into the Verbatim of the Report on Page 2, and I quote what the Acting Auditor-General then had said:

“What happens also when a JEE Award is made, the accounting people, the Ministry of Economy should do a guideline of what we call a best practise guide. In that, all formulas are there and individual ministries which are paying or effecting that award use one template, one guideline to make that payment. What they did was, they issued a manual cheque which was a nightmare and there is a high risk of some cheques which could gone have astray or being cashed somewhere else or someone who was entitled to it did not receive it.

Given that most of these officers had retired or had passed on, when the money had gone into their accounts, it bounced back to the Ministry. And what they did was, they wrote individual cheques and sent it to them and most of them did not receive it at the end.”

That was the observation by the Auditor-General. There were three stages of accountants involved in this review:

1. Internal audit done by the Police;
2. External audit was done by the Ministry of Defence and few other Ministries; and
3. There was another set of auditors that the Fiji Police Force and the Government had engaged to clean up their accounts, they were retired accountants or former accountants.

They were also brought to the Committee to give their views on how they had handled this. They were the ones that were tasked to arrive at a figure so that this whole pay-out to be settled. When we were interviewing them, they said that the figure that they had calculated came to about above \$25 million. But, one of the problems that they had faced given their terms of reference was only about three weeks and for them to come up with a figure and report back, there was pressure by the Government, given that Parliament had already approved that, and by Pay 7 of 2015, the money had to be paid out.

So when they gave their figures to the Ministry of Economy when they sat, the Ministry of Economy then said that they had to cut it down. They had to revise down their figures to \$16.7

million and there was a shortfall of \$7 million that was again paid later in 2015 in the month of August. Those were some of things that came up, but, the problem that these auditors faced was the lack of time that they were given to come up to that figure and some of the calculations that they made in that short time could have been an error given the non-availability of information, plus the figures that they arrived at was not the one that was reflected in the final payment that was done.

They gave some of their experiences while they were civil servants on how these types of payments could have been done. They also identified a very important issue which we could note in our debate also and that was when the experienced Accountants and Accounts Officers left and the system was managed by the very young and inexperienced one and there were errors that came up that should have been rectified, if experienced people were there who knew the work. This could not have happened if they were there.

Given the recommendations and findings that the Committee arrived at and the concerns raised, we hope that the Government has attended to most of them; the reconciliation part and the system within the Fiji Police Force. One of the major problems faced by the retirees when they came into the taskforce was the non-availability of information given that there was data not ready for them, the files were missing, people's names were missing from the payroll and the various information and documents made available for them to view their calculations were not provided by the Force.

There were delays and the three weeks that they were given to clean the whole accounts, for the first week they were only being briefed, in the second week, they requested for information to come in so that they start their work and by the third week, they were told that by for Pay 7, they have to arrive at a figure. After all these, some of the police officers received only part of it. Most of them still have not received anything at all. Some who are sitting in the gallery today also have not received the full amount and neither has the Force come out clean to explain to them the real formula of how each of their amount was calculated.

Sir, given the advice by the Committee in the presence of the current Commissioner, they requested him if he can have an audience with these officers and for the accounts people to explain to them so that they can resolve this, unfortunately, that was not done according to them.

This kind of issues are good for us to debate on and this Petition is good that it came out and highlighted many problems within the Fiji Police Force. You can see there in the findings if you go right down on the various challenges that we faced, even as the Committee in trying to get information and also the recommendations that are there, there needs to be a proper overhaul done to this particular Department, and given that we just fell short of recommending that those who were involved should have been criminally charged, the Committee felt short of that. We gave that to the Ministry to decide on that by itself.

Now we have a new Minister for Defence, probably, he could act on those and the various things that have been highlighted in the Committee's Report. These are all problems that happened with the police. They should be law-abiding people and should uphold the law but it all happened under the nose of the current Government, the FijiFirst Government; and also we look forward that this will be addressed and the injustice faced by the retired police officers some of whom still have not received their Job Evaluation Exercise payout, will be attended to.

Those are the few comments to give a background on this particular Petition to help the other speakers after me to talk and speak on the various solutions that could be put forward for the House to take note of and provide justice for those petitioners that had sought the help of Parliament. *Vinaka vakalevu*, Sir.

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

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I wish to contribute to the debate in support of the motion. Honourable Speaker, Sir, allow me to speak on the motion before the House by thanking the Committee that has brought all the people of Fiji who petitioned the Parliament drawing our attention over issues faced by our police officers relating to the vast anomaly present in their back-pay for the Year 2015.

Before speaking on the recommendations made by the Committee, Honourable Speaker, Sir, I wish to share my own thought that this Petition was dealing with an issue pertaining to humanity. Humanity to me, Honourable Speaker, Sir, is simply about how we love one another and how we feel for another and the sense of compassion that exists with the abundance of goodness in mankind. It includes sympathy, tolerance, good heartedness and mercifulness. This allows a person to be of full understanding and considerate.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I am hopeful that the police officers who were affected by the errors highlighted in the Report are adequately compensated, whether they are still in the Force, have left the Force or Retired and to the beneficiaries of those who have passed away, there is no compromise for that.

The issues raised by the Petition brings into question the number of issues which need to be redressed. Some of them may have been redressed already but with the extensive review of the FPF announced in the last budget, an exorbitant sum of allocation being made for the purpose leaves us all with the desire to see not many but all of the recommendations made in the Report fully implemented. I see no reason why it cannot be done as part of the reform now in progress.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, there are some important revelations by the Report dealing with how important it is to ensure the public administration is always immune from political influence and not placed in unqualified and inexperienced hands. It speaks volumes about the absence of sound leadership and making a mockery of financial management.

There are some of the issues that strike to the core of good governance and its basic tenets such as accountability, openness and transparency. These elements have clearly gone missing resulting into the anomaly of back-pay. It draws some of the points why it is necessary that suitably qualified personnel are put in positions of responsibility and the observations made by the Auditor-General and Parliamentary Committees are implemented.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, the police as all of us in this House are aware of, their roles and responsibilities are doing great service to this nation by securing life and property, maintaining public law and order, and engaging in meaningful community development. They are not machines but human beings with families and personal commitments such as providing basic needs for their households, education, medical fees, and so forth.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, while we all agree that policing is more of a vocation of service than to earn, we cannot shy away from the fact that people work for money and only the error of a few people in the system either recklessly or deliberately results into anomalies then the people who work to earn, are at a loss. In this case, it was a grave error and a huge loss to every police officer affected.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I think it is the unanimous view of this House that this should not be allowed to happen again in the FPF or any other Department in the future and the means and ways

to avert such incidents of loss, not only funds but confidence in the system that can very ably be averted by implementing good governance practices.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, with those observations, I wish to ask the Government to apologise to all the police officers affected. That is morally the right thing to do on the floor of this House by an elected and responsible Government.

Once again, in support of the motion, I plea to the Government that all eligible police officers from 2004 to 2012 in the Service and all out of the Service, did not or partially received their JEE should be paid their dues, as recommended by the Standing Committee. Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. Let me first acknowledge the work of the Committee. It is unfortunate that this is an event that has already occurred but the positive out of this Report, Honourable Speaker, and this is why this honourable House exists is, it helps us to be proactive and, of course, address the issues that were raised.

Although there were parties that were aggrieved, there were parties that were affected and I take this opportunity, Honourable Speaker, to convey the sincere apology of the Fiji Police Force and, of course, the Ministry of Defence and Government for this unfortunate incident. But let me assure those that were affected and all Fijians that the Government has the responsibility to look after everyone and we will continue to ensure that the principles of good governance are put in place. Of course, look at the other issues of the people that we are called to serve.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, in any incident, there are so many sides to a story but the facts will help us to come to some conclusions, but aside from THE facts, there are truths as well and these are things that are quite hard to determine when we have incidents as such. The other predicament that I was faced with and I am not making this as an excuse, is the absence of data so that it can help in the investigations and, of course, making informed decisions as well.

However, let me assure this Honourable House that the Ministry and, of course, the Fiji Police Force is doing its best to address this. As I have stated, it is unfortunate that it has happened in the past and it reveals to us the gaps, the weaknesses that we have in place but the opportunity is for us to look at how we can address it; who will be responsible; what resources need to be allocated; what monitoring and evaluation systems that we need to put in place? Of course, continuing to feedback into the system so that we can achieve efficiency in the way we do service delivery and, of course, conducting our day to day work as well.

As I have alluded to, Honourable Speaker, Sir, we have the future before us and we can take the necessary steps to address all these issues. It has been raised on the formula used and what was agreed between the Ministry of Economy and the Fiji Police Force.

Let me just clarify this, Honourable Speaker, Sir, the Fiji Police Force, in consultation with the Ministry of Economy, agreed in implementing the 30 percent back-pay to the Fiji Police Force from 2004 to 2008 and they started the payments for 2007 and 2008, 2010 and 2011 period and, of course, which was paid in 2015. This is what was agreed, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

For officers who have left the Service respectively in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009 and 2012, the payments were calculated as follows:

- 2004, on the pro-rata of 30 percent,
- 2005, on the pro-rata of 24 percent;
- 2006, on the pro-rata of 18 percent;
- 2009, on the pro-rata of 12 percent; and
- 2012, on the pro-rata of 6 percent.

Of course, it was not meant for all members of the Fiji Police Force but, of course, for those that were within the Salary Band from PL01 to PL08, which are from the rank of Police Constable to Senior Superintendent. Probably, this is an area where there was a lot of misunderstanding.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, we have noted the recommendations of the Committee and, again, let me assure this honourable House that the Fiji Police Force has taken some necessary steps to address this and, of course, look at improving its management processes, as well for the future.

These are some of the key initiatives that have been undertaken. Tomorrow in one of the Oral Questions, Honourable Speaker, I will be talking about the reforms that are taking place in the Fiji Police Force, but specifically for this item agenda before the House, one of the major initiatives is the digitalisation of the HR records, the accounts, the police records, for safe and secure information database. This was out of the incident and this report was carried out in 2016 in which the Fiji Police Force, together with the ITC Services, were engaged for the roll out of the Fiji Government Consolidated Human Resources Information Systems and the Fiji Police Force has secured a donor and Aid-based equitable server for roll out of the HRIS database.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, the Fiji Police Force is currently developing its database to facilitate this recommendation.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, we take note that policemen are not meant, particularly to look at the accounts, and there has been a lot of recruitment now into the Accounts Section and the HR Division of the Fiji Police Force so that these issues can be addressed as well and I will not go into the details but let me assure this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that recruitments of civilian qualified people into the Accounts Section and, of course, in the HR Division of the Fiji Police Force has taken place and we will continue to do so, ensuring that we recruit the right people with the right qualification so that they can deliver as expected of them as well.

Improvements in the processes and systems, this is a simple management issue, Honourable Speaker, Sir, and the Fiji Police Force is doing its best to improve its processes and systems.

Training is very, very essential, Honourable Speaker, Sir. It is an unfortunate thing that we always see, particularly in the Public Service when people are promoted without doing the necessary training. That is what I always call an injustice because we want to demand out of Officials but yet they have not undergone the necessary training that is required of them to be competent, not only competent in their current job but, of course, to look at development as well, to prepare them for bigger responsibilities later in future.

It all boils down to leadership. We need good leadership, Honourable Speaker, Sir and the Fiji Police Force in its current training regimes and the exchanges with our bilateral partners and other organisation, is doing an excellent work in capacity development of its people and we will see the results, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

So, again, I give assurance to the Honourable House that the Fiji Police Force is doing its best to address the issues and challenges as raised in this Report, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I will take the last speaker on this.

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

I must, at the outset, thank the Honourable Minister for realising that things need to be corrected and that he has given the assurance that the anomalies, the relationship and the system going forward is going to take the attention that it needs to give us a well-resourced and a Police Force that we value by caring for them in the way we should.

They are people who go the extra mile almost everyday, it is not an 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. calling, it is almost 24/7 and they go into areas where most of us are not willing to go to, to carry out their roles, and for that we salute them. I am grateful to the Honourable Minister for being contrite today and offering apology and for that, this side of the House is very grateful. We appreciate that as opposed to the barrage of lectures we get on almost every instance that Honourable Members from the other side of the House rise up to say something. We are the ones who always meander, but I think if someone is really using a barometer here to calculate who is really meandering, I think that side of the House will win hands down, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, while we are discussing the Police Force, I just want to make a plea for the Special Constabulary. In Nadroga, I have had the approach from some of my people there who serve in the Constabulary, and they are wondering if you can relook at their pathway for them to become full Constables of the Police Force. I do not know how it is done, but apparently they feel that it can be improved, that we can set out a proper pathway for them to become full members of the Police Force.

I sit in the Economic Affairs Committee that scrutinizes the Intelligence Unit and we speak with the Police Arm of the Intelligence Unit, and what I learnt from there when we spoke with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, because I asked about the retention, whether people want to remain in the Police Force. And he said to us, "Once you become a member of the Police Force, you want to remain there forever. He said people who left want to come back." So it is the fraternity that appeals to those who have joined that Force and here we are, we have this Special Constabulary, who will need to be encouraged with the proper pathway to become full members of the Police Force.

That, Honourable Speaker, is my contribution and I just would like to congratulate the Committee for the work they did, and just go back to the need to allow for petitions to be brought to the House. This one has achieved the desired results and basically, we understand what the petition is. It is for that voice that is not heard through the parties, et cetera, or any voice can be heard in Parliament and a petition is one way of doing it. And I am glad that the members of the Police Force who felt aggrieved, found a way to bring it to Parliament through a petition.

For that, Honourable Speaker, I would like the House to continue to consider or to encourage the presentation of petitions in the House. I say this, Honourable Speaker, because early in the last Parliament, we were presenting a lot of petitions in the House. Later in the year, it became very, very difficult. FijiFirst did whatever they could to discourage petitions to be brought into the House. And I would hope that this Parliament would accommodate the petitions in our deliberations. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Committee and everyone who had participated in the debate this afternoon.

Sir, the steps taken are very clear, a Job Evaluation Exercise was commissioned, they finished the Exercise, they put the report back, it was accepted by Cabinet, Cabinet made a resolution to go through and pay.

The Honourable Minister for Defence had no reason to apologise, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are all heirs and successors to our predecessors, so their fault we put right, their promise we carry out. And this month our brothers in the Islamic faith are going through a very important month of Ramadan. It is a time when they observe a period when they will fast and focus on the word of God, as it was given to the Holy Prophet which formed the core of the *Holy Koran*.

And part of that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is the Leviticus 19:13, and I am sure the Honourable Minister knows, and I quote: "You must not withhold until morning the wages due to a hired hand." So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Evaluation was carried out, the Report was submitted, Government accepted it and I am very glad that the Honourable Minister almost promised today that they will pay, and there are ways of doing that.

The Honourable Minister for Economy knows that some of those who have been paid would probably were not involved. During our time when we had Job Evaluation Exercises, you receive the new rates of pay from such and such a pay day, for example, Pay 26 of whatever year it is. And then you continue for the rest of the year.

Then you go back to Parliament and try and find where you can get that money or pay them or give them promissory notes, it is like a compulsory saving. They saved on what they had earned but not receive, they put it in the bank and it stays there, that a compulsory saving, until you can go back to Parliament for virement or additional provision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I give the floor to the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence for his Right of Reply.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I do not have any further comments. Thank you.

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

(Chorus of "Noes")

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

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I have been informed that dinner is being served and on that note, I intend to adjourn now for an hour for dinner and then we can continue with the next Agenda Item which is Questions.

The first Question will be asked by Honourable Pio Tikoduadua, which was supposed to be asked by Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua but she is indisposed, so I have allowed for Honourable Pio Tikoduadua to do that. We adjourn for dinner.

The Parliament adjourned at 6.24 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 7.32 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I am allowing the Honourable Pio Tikoduadua to ask Question 96/2019 on behalf of Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua.

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

Recruitment of Expatriates by AFL (Question No. 96/2019)

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications inform Parliament why Airports Fiji Limited has engaged a Washington-based firm to recruit expatriate Air Traffic Controllers for employment in Fiji?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, yes, AFL had engaged a Washington-based firm which is called “Washington Consultant Group” to source air traffic controllers when some air traffic controllers had illegally gone off work, in order to recruit people to fill in the gap because obviously we needed to ensure that the airport continued to run. That is why they had reached out to this consulting firm, but, obviously they are not engaged anymore.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Tuisawau.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. Supplementary question on the three Air Traffic Control staff who were terminated yesterday or two days ago, could you please explain the reason, could you be more humane and take them back.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, when someone gets employed by an employer, there are certain terms and conditions of employment you have to adhere to and obviously, Sir, if terms of conditions were not adhered to, that is why people have been terminated.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. A supplementary question to the Honourable Minister for Economy and Attorney General. Could you inform this House how the consulting firm was recruited, whether a tender was called for in terms of recruitment and a little more bit of background in terms of this Washington based firm?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member would know that Fiji Airports is owned by Airports Fiji Limited which is a limited liability company and therefore they have their own Board, they have their own procedures including procurement.

As you would know, a limited liability company does not go through the Government tender process. So obviously they have been through their own procedures, the rationale obviously is that

this firm does not actually have Air Traffic Control sitting with them, as a lot of the Members would know that they have specialist recruiting firms internationally. So they specialise, for example, there are certain recruiting agencies that specialise in sourcing engineers, some source people in different professions.

This particular firm actually does specialise in sourcing Air Traffic Controllers and as we have said the reason why AFL actually reached out to them, is because we could not have our international airport coming to a halt because we do not have Air Traffic Controllers who actually walked off their jobs illegally; no strike.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, what is really interesting is that we announced last year, this Government, we increased maternity leave from 84 days to 98 days. We introduced for the first time, no other Government has done this, paternity leave so fathers can go on leave when they have a child born in their family. We introduced also for the first time, which no one else has ever done is, Family Care Leave of five days.

Coincidentally, approximately in excess of 30 people, all of a sudden, for a few days all got sick or took Family Care Leave. Obviously, this was a calculated endeavour to bring the Air Traffic Control to a halt and not allow planes to land in Fiji, stopped the entire Tourism Industry, also give up our rights that we internationally also provide traffic services too. So this is why we obviously needed to ensure that the planes kept on flying into Fiji, tourists kept on coming and the economy kept on ticking.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka, you have the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, you remember in the early days, our Air Traffic Controllers were trained by the Singaporean Government; the relationship with Dr. Lee Kuan Yew at that time and they were all perceived at that time to be amongst the best in terms of the skills that they acquired. Can I just ask, how long it takes to train an Air Traffic Controller today? It baffles me that we can just remove them like this and bring in someone from outside given the investment in training some of our best brains to manage the airspace. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We again have obfuscation of the issues. Mr. Speaker, Sir, obviously these Traffic Controllers would be sourced, they would have the prerequisite skills sets. That is why you go and recruit them, but Mr. Speaker, Sir, just to highlight, we have very good Air Traffic Controllers. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it does not in any way mean they are not any good, but they need to turn up to work.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, also let me highlight that in the last five years, Air Traffic Controllers in Fiji at Nadi on average have received a 61 percent pay increase. We have also embarked on recruitment. When I say we, I mean AFL. It has embarked on a recruitment. They also put in place some redundancy strategies where we had certain members of the management that were also given training.

Now, this training can range from three months to nine months then you upgrade yourself and the more training you get, more exposure you get to the equipment, et cetera, your pay actually increases. Some of these Air Traffic Controllers who are actually getting \$70,000 to \$80,000 and some of them with the next batch of increased air traffic management, they will get up to \$110,000 and some of them are Form Five level, Form Six level.

They were recruited in the Strategic Air Services Limited (SASL) days. Remember SASL? NATA days? They were recruited then. So they have continued to be in the system. AFL has continued to train them and they have continued to be in the system. Of course, AFL is now trying to get more graduates but the reality of the matter is that the air traffic controllers on average earn \$70,000 in 2018. That is the story.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, what is really interesting also that we have a very low rate of attrition. In other words, very few of them are getting poached because the salaries over here and the conditions here are actually quite good. I am just talking about the basic salaries. Enormous allowances, they have their annual leaves which are far more than what we get in two weeks. They get a lot more. The breaks that they get between managing air traffic space is a lot more. I mean I can give a whole plethora if that question was asked of me, I could give you all the specific details.

HON. SPEAKER.- Last supplementary question.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Honourable Speaker, thank you. Very quickly on these people that we had recruited from the States. The question is, are they still being employed as air traffic controllers today and how did we recruit them exactly in terms of conditions for what they get paid in light of what our people, who used to recruit air traffic controllers in the past get here in Fiji?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Let me reiterate, Mr. Speaker, Sir. No air traffic controller from USA actually came to Fiji to do the job. That is my point. The consulting firm that goes out and recruits air traffic controllers was engaged but no air traffic controller came on because what the AFL management did do was they started talking to these people who walked off their jobs. They brought them in and they had discussions with them and many of them of course, were misled by two or three people, in fact this is a very interesting story.

When AFL put up on the screen and showed them how much salaries they have increased, you know, the 61 percent odd in the past five years, do you know what the ringleader said. The ringleader turned around and said to the CEO (the executive chair), “well this does not count because we did not ask for it, you gave it on your own.” That is the mentality. To be frank, I did not want to get into this debate.

Some of these trade unionists are trying to make themselves relevant in the modern day Fiji which actually rewards employees even before they ask for it. That is the difference and that is precisely what is happening in Fiji.

The Civil Service Reform, the salary increments for teachers, doctors, everyone else was not done because the unions asked for it. We gave it on our own volition. We went out to the market, did the market survey, got the market pricing – gave them the salary increases. That is what is happening. This is why some of these people trying to make themselves relevant. The entire process was all about that.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move onto the next question and I give the floor to the Honourable Vegnathan to ask Question 97/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

Valuation Division – Type of Property Information Available
(Question No. 97/2019)

HON. G. VEGNATHAN asked the Government upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources enlighten Parliament on the type of property information that is available with the Valuation Department and whether this is accessible by the public and stakeholders?

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to answer his question in a succinct way. One of the important roles of the Valuation Division in my Ministry is to collate property sales data. The Valuation Division is the custodian of Property transactions data which is collated on a daily basis from the Stamp Duties Office of Fiji Revenue and Customs Services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, within the Valuation Division we have a Statistics Section that is responsible for the;

- Collection of property sales information and its appropriate updating of records.
- Compilation of property sales data; and
- The preparation of monthly sales information report.

Mr Speaker Sir, information collected includes vendor and purchaser details, title reference, zone, area, sale price, transaction date and it is captured in the Valuation System. The Division collects property sales information on all land tenure types; that is freehold, State land and *iTaukei* land. This information is generated into a Property Sales Information Report on a monthly basis that are made available and accessible to the public and stakeholders at a nominal fee of \$50 VAT Exclusive Price.

Valuers are able to do their sales comparison approach in determining the current market value through comparison of recent property sales of similar properties in the area. This is the type of folio that we create after the information is collected and my staff attend the briefs at Revenue and Customs Office at 8.00 every morning and things like the valuation number, street address, vendor details, purchaser details, title reference, zone, area and sale price, even the same data recorded in such folios. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. For the third Oral Question for today, I give the floor to the Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi to ask Question No. 98/2019. You have the floor, Madam.

Lease levy on Mahogany Plantations
(Question No. 98/2019)

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications explain to Parliament who approves the formula for the lease levied on mahogany plantations? I am particularly interested in the mahogany plantations on native land.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Mr. Speaker Sir, to obtain lease or to plant mahogany for Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited (FHCL) obviously if it is an *iTaukei* land, then they go to *iTaukei* Land Trust Board (*iTLTB*). If it is any other type of lease then they will go to whoever is the lessor. The formula then, of course, is set by *iTLTB*.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- A supplementary question to the Honourable Attorney-General: Under the Mahogany Industry Development Decree changed to Act in 2014, the Mahogany Industry Council directs the NLTB on matters regarding leases, et cetera, that is at Section 6(1)(e), and I quote:

“To direct the Native Land Trust Board in the exercise of any rights or obligations the Board may have -

- (i) as lessor under a mahogany lease, including the termination or renewal of such lease;”
et cetera

Under Section 12(2), I quote:

“The Native Land Trust Board, in the exercise of its rights and obligations as lessor under any mahogany lease, is subject to the direction of the Mahogany Council including in particular as regards –

- (a) any variation of the terms of the lease;
- (b) termination of the lease;
- (c) rights under the lease in respect of default or failure on the part of the lessee in complying with the lessee's obligations under the lease.”

Section 16(1), I quote:

“This decree has effect notwithstanding any provision of the Native Land Trust Act [Cap. 134] or any other law and accordingly, to the extent if there is inconsistency between this Decree and the Native Land Trust Act or any other law, the Decree shall prevail.”

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, what is your supplementary question.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- My supplementary question, Sir, I am stating that the NLTB does not develop the formula or decide on the formula for the leases of native land on which the mahogany plantation is on. But there are provisions in the Mahogany Decree

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, you cannot make a statement and ask the question at the same time. It is either you are making a statement which you should not be doing since this is a supplementary question. If you have the supplementary question then you should ask the Honourable Attorney-General. It is as simple as that. You are not making a statement.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I will ask the Honourable Attorney-General, what role does the Mahogany Industry Council play in the determination of the lease levied for each of the Mahogany Plantation lease by the Native Hardwood Corporation?

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member is actually a lawyer and she should know that it is called an Act. Stop referring to it as a Decree, that is the law, you should know that.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That is another lawyer.

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if the Honourable Member wanted to ask a question on the Mahogany Industry Act, she should have asked the question on the Mahogany Industry Act. I would have come armed with the Act because knowing her reputation in respect of calling the Decree, I do not know whether she has even read the amended portions of the Act. That is the problem. So, the substantive question is this: The formula that is applied, who is that formula determined by? Who approves the formula? The formula is determined by the lessor which is the iTLTB in this case.

Recently there was a lease renewal for some land in Sawakasa in Tailevu. This Sawakasa lease was extended only for 15 years, again determined by the landowners to allow FHCL to harvest the mahogany that is already on the lease. Now if it was FHCL's way which she is intimating, they would have got a longer lease but the landowner has decided that they will, through iTLTB only given a 15-year lease. They have only extended for 15 years and, in fact, the harvesting of that will start tomorrow, 15th May. So, the terms and conditions are decided by the iTLTB and I urge the Honourable Member to go and read the Act properly and look at the amendments. I hope she is reading the most uptodate version of it.

HON. ADIL QIONIBARAVI.- Can I ask the Honourable Attorney-General, the Mahogany Industry Development Act ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No, you may not.

HON. ADIL QIONIBARAVI.- ... Section 6, I would like you to explain to me why is it that the Mahogany Industry Development Act states

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, you have already asked the supplementary question, that is what you are entitled to. The next supplementary question by the Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- These responsibilities formally rested with iTLTB before the amendment. Does the Government intend to return the responsibility to iTLTB.

HON. MEMBER.- Always there.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- When?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the responsibility of leasing all iTaukei land, should the landowners wish to either lease through iTLTB or through the Lands Department, they can do so.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on. The fourth Oral Question for today, Honourable Selai Adimaitoga, you have the floor.

Status of Children in State's Care
(Question No. 99/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation update Parliament about the status of children who are wards of the State and cared for in the Children's Home around Fiji?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA (Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, by way of background, there are nine registered residential care homes for children in Fiji. These are homes that have been approved as residential Homes.

Of these nine Homes, two are State Homes and seven are Homes administered by Non-Government Organisations, including religious bodies. There are four Homes in the Central Division, four in the West and one in the North. Their establishment to provide care and protection for children who are victims of abuse and neglect, including those who have been abandoned by their families. This is with the exception of the Juvenile Rehabilitation Development Centre, used to be known as the Suva Boys' Centre and Pearly Gates Homes which cater for juveniles in conflict with the law.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, there are currently 152 children under the care of the State. These children become wards of the State for different reasons, some are placed in these Homes for their own safety, the necessity to remove them from their home environment, especially due to physical and/or sexual abuse, some had to be removed because of physical neglect and others were placed in the Homes after they have been abandoned.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to ensure that there is a holistic development plan in relation to their upbringing in the Homes, there is currently a minimum standard of care for children in residential placement. It serves as a guideline and must be compliant by the Children's Home that has been approved by the Honourable Minister.

The standard entails safety and protection of the children, their care in the Home, including their education, socialisation, life skills training. All children who are placed in the Homes have a care plan that addresses their physical, social, emotional, medical, intellectual and spiritual needs, Honourable Speaker. It also includes the future plans for the child. It also assists the carers and welfare officers to ensure that the child's needs are addressed while they are being wards of the State.

The Ministry works together with the Homes to ensure that children attend school and that they are encouraged to participate in decision-making, if they are of the appropriate age, Honourable Speaker. In a nutshell, Honourable Speaker, that is relevant information in relation to children who are wards of the State at the present time. Thank you.

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

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to ask a supplementary question. The question to the Honourable Minister is: I understand that most of these children come from broken families. What is the Government's plan in place to help the young youths who will become future parents to prepare themselves for their responsibilities as parenthood, motherhood and fatherhood, so that we can minimise the broken family issues?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. As I had stated, every child in the care of the State has a holistic plan in relation to the development of the child in the various aspects of life.

For children who are under the care of the State, they are required to leave the Homes when they turn 18. So while a child is in the care of the State, there is always communication happening between the Ministry and the families and communities from which these children come from to

assist in their reintegration back into the community, whether it is the immediate family or an extended family member who has kept in constant touch with the child, while the child was in the care of the State. That exercise happens throughout the time when the child is under the care of the State to ensure that when the child reaches adulthood, there is a place ready for him or her outside of the care of the State Home. Thank you.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker and thank you Honourable Minister for that explanation. I recently visited Pearly Gates Home at Mahaffy Drive and the girls are well looked after. But Honourable Minister, the Home is in dire need of maintenance, particularly, the electrical wiring. They are not able to use any electrical appliances because of the non-functional powerpoints.

So, Honourable Minister, can you give us a timeline when the maintenance, particularly the electrical wiring, can be attended to as our children are placed in very high risk for any electrical mishap in there? Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. In relation to the girls at Pearly Gates Home, within the next few weeks there will be an advertisement in the papers. What the State is doing through the Ministry is to look at an alternative provider of services for these girls. The contract for the management of the Home is coming to an end at this end of this financial year, and Government is looking at an alternative provider to provide a more holistic environment of care for the girls.

Just on that note also, Honourable Speaker, Sir, I had spoken about the reintegration of children back into their homes and communities when they turn 18. Of course, this is keeping in mind that some of these children are in the State Homes because of abuse by their own family members or by their extended family or within the communities that they live in. For these children, Honourable Speaker, of course, that is kept in mind and we always look for an alternative outside of the immediate environment that has caused the removal of the child from that space in the first place.

So, Honourable Speaker, yes, for Pearly Gates Home, there will be an advertisement in the next few weeks to look at an alternative provider of services for the girls in the Home. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Alvick Maharaj, you have the floor.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister explain what is the Ministry doing to ensure their holistic development?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- I believe, Honourable Speaker, I had spoken at some length in relation to that, which is the minimum standards of care for children in the Home. It is basically a guideline that puts in place the care plan for each child under State care whether it is the education, health, emotional, medical, intellectual and spiritual needs that provides some guidelines for all Homes which look after children. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the next question. I give the floor to the Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau to ask his question. You have the floor, Sir.

Renting Government Quarters on Market Rate
(Question No. 100/2019)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU asked the Government, upon notice:

Would the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications provide an update to Parliament on the status of renting out of Government Quarters at the market rate?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the status is that, it still continues in the Suva area and that places where it is not applicable, you have civil servants who can access either for rent-free, for example, doctors, et cetera, but also at 8 percent or 4 percent subsidised rental rate.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Minister did not answer my question. When someone says “status”, it means quite a few things. It not just a simple answer as you gave. It means the number of houses that are being rented, what is the income and from what year, and what are the types of leases these houses are under? Thank you. So I would like to request that he answers that question.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, again the Honourable Member would have better served himself, that he actually specifically ask the questions. How much rent do you get? How many quarters are rented? We would have answered the question, but he says the “status”.

The question is, “Would the Minister provide and update to Parliament on the status of renting out Government quarters”. The status is that we are renting quarters out, that is the status of it. I can tell how much money we make from it, if you want to know?

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Yes, that is what I want?

(Laughter)

How much? The total?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- I am asking the question for you and you are answering it for yourself.

To-date, the sum of \$10.67 million has been remitted to Government Consolidated Fund for the past three financial years, inclusive of subsidised rent and market rate rentals. Out of the \$10.67 million, \$4.10 million is derived from 136 quarters rented out at market rate.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Honourable Speaker, we have heard that it is a substantial amount of money and the question is related to Section 8 of the State Land Act, which states and I quote:

“Land acquired for public purposes may revert to iTaukei land, if no longer required for such purpose.”

Now, it has changed in purpose, before it was for public use for housing civil servants, who are working for Government, but you have reverted the purpose to a different purpose...

HON. SPEAKER.- Ask your question.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- ... which is commercial. So the question is, why are you not observing Section 8 of the Act?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member, needs to look at the Constitution. And this is the first time.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Then why are you here?

(Laughter)

If you did not approve the Constitution, why are you here? This kind of superfluous feedback that we get from these people. I mean, like us be real, stop being a joke.

The Constitution established this Parliament. You swore an oath under the Constitution in this very Chamber. So why do you say, "Ah, we did not agree to it." If you did not agree to it, you did not adhere to the change in conditions of it, please, let us have some intelligence in this Chamber, come on.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question he has asked.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- What is your question, I have forgotten your question now.

(Laughter)

What is your question?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Breach of Section 8.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Yes, you have heard it.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Constitution is the first time any Constitution has said, that if you acquire iTaukei Land for a particular purpose and, for example, if Government acquires a land to build a water reservoir on top of the hill.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Just stick to his question.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

You have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, if for example, Government acquired a lease over a particular property on hill to build a reservoir. If after 10 years or 15 years, the State no longer requires to have the reservoir there and the original purpose of leasing that was to build a reservoir, then previously what would happen, the State would actually continue to keep that land, or sometimes we have *iTaukei* land actually converted to Crown Land behind the State House, Muanikau area. But then it never then went back to the *iTaukei* landowners.

This Constitution says, if the land acquired, as the Honourable Tuisawau, points out, was acquired for that particular purpose and you are no longer using for that purpose, under this Constitution the State is obligated to return that land to the landowners. It was never there before, 'obligated'.

Honourable Tuisawau should also know that there are four lawyers in his midst and that the law does not apply retrospectively, the law applies prospectively for the future. You cannot apply the law retrospectively.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- We know that.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So why is he asking that question? So why is he asking that question? It is silly!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

I think we will move on to the next question. I give the floor to the Honourable Dr. Salik Govind to ask his question. You have the floor.

Conservation and Management of Fisheries Resources
(Question No. 101/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries explain the importance of a science-based approach in the conservation and management of our fisheries resources?

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU (Minister for Fisheries).- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, and I thank the Honourable Dr. Govind for the question.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, to successfully manage natural resources by agencies responsible for the sustainable use of natural resources, science is very important.

For fisheries management, a science-based approach includes undertaking high quality observation, research and analysis to fully understand the status and the dynamic of fish population in their respective habitats.

The exponential population growth, coupled with factors all encompass to increase fishing effort, pollution, foreshore development and destructive fishing practices, pose threat to coastal ecosystem.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, we need to always be ahead of the threats, undertaking scientific research is periodical to that. Science allows managers and practitioners to identify problems

associated with human efforts. More importantly, scientific help to provide indicative levels that support the basis of introducing management measures aimed at sustainability.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, that is why the Ministry of Fisheries is building up efforts to build a robust academic institution, NGOs and external partners, who will together achieve a robust scientific platform that helps us sustain and increases results better. I thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- There are endangered species like *kawakawa* and *donu*. How does the science-based approach help sustain those kind of fishes?

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, I thank the Honourable Nawaikula for the supplementary question. For species that we believe are endangered, we have introduced seasonal bans. Seasonal bans basically means that we will ban them during the spawning period where they lay their eggs to allow them to reproduce. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you Honourable Speaker and thank the Honourable Minister for that explanation. Has the National Fisheries Policy been finalised? If no, why not, and if yes, what kind of enabling mechanism are there to assist women in fisheries, for example, women in fisheries network scientifically, as you have alluded to. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I thank the Honourable Salote Radrodro for the supplementary question.

Yes, the Report has been finalised and it should be out very soon for public consumption and that is where it will indicate the association and partnership with women who are involved in fisheries. But it does not include the nets that the Honourable Salote Radrodro has been asking for the last two years because that is unsustainable fishing method.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Lynda Tabuya, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. Now, the Honourable Minister knows that data has proven as far as one of the biggest threats to the supplier of fish is the continued use and dumping in the ocean, of single use plastic bags and plastic straws. It is one of the biggest threats.

This is the scientific evidence proven and is the scientific approach. My question to the Honourable Minister, is it not time that Fiji follows Vanuatu and other countries that have banned the use of single use plastic bags and plastic straws? By law, it has not come here to the House, so, so I am asking the Honourable Minister.

HON. SPEAKER.- Do not repeat the question. You have asked the question that is it. Ask the question once.

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. I have alluded to it in this House on numerous occasions that Fiji has committed itself that it will ban single use plastic by 2020.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, I could have answered that but I let you.

(Laughter)

Because I do not just sit here and let you talk. I listen to the questions and the answers as well. Supplementary question?

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Yes, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- You have the floor.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- There is a lot of talk about conservation of

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Coming!

Fisheries resources out in the sea but I would like to ask the Honourable Minister, what about rivers?

HON. SPEAKER.- That is where fishes are, out in the sea.

(Laughter)

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- No, no, Sir, there are fish also in the river. There is no sea where I come from, Sir, so there is a lot of mismanagement of fisheries resources, absolutely nothing done so I would just like to ask the Honourable Minister. What about freshwater? That is my question, Sir. There is fish in freshwater.

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

HON. CDR.S.T.KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir and I thank the Honourable Member for the supplementary question. Fish includes offshore, coastal and inshore which includes rivers.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Minister, part of the conservation and the scientific approach to fishing also involves paying the *qoliqoli* owners what is due to them. They promised people of Nadroga that he would be paying them the proceeds due to them. Can he confirm that he has done so?

HON. CDR.S.T.KOROILAVESAU.- Honourable Speaker, thank you very much for the supplementary question from the Honourable Member. But that is totally a different question that he needs to ask another day.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on. The next question was supposed to be asked by the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua of the Minister for Education. Unfortunately, the Minister for Education has gone to the hospital, so I have agreed for this question to be put over to tomorrow, and also the Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua was supposed to ask a question earlier on. She is indisposed today. So we move on to the next question.

MV Liahona II Incident at Sea
(Question No. 103/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services inform Parliament on the incident at sea concerning the *MV Liahona II* losing its front ramp?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir and I thank the Honourable Maharaj for his question on the *MV Liahona II* and the loss of its front ramp.

I think for all of us in Fiji, especially for those of us that come from the islands, we are always a bit worried about boats and the fact that people's lives can be lost at sea. So we were quite happy to see that even though this mishap happened, no one's life was lost.

But the *MV Liahona II* is a motor landing craft, has a carrying capacity of 95 tonnes and passenger capacity of 290 passengers. We all know what happened to it in terms of the ramp falling off on the date in question which is the 19th April, 2019. When these boats are about to leave or every time they have a trip, Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji (MSAF) has an enforcement and compliance officer whose job is to have a look to make sure that all the essential requirements are met before the boat leaves and before it comes back. They do this by a visual check on various things on the boat in terms of structures, machinery, the water tight integrity and manning prior to departure and also to make sure that the current service certificate is up to date. So, those sorts of things were done in terms of the *MV Liahona II*.

On that particular day when this incident happened, the weather forecast for the night stated that the wind speed would be between 29 kilometres per hour to 49 kilometres per hour and that the wave height would be probably between two metres to four metres. Given this situation, when the *MV Liahona II* left on that particular day, it left for Dravuni, it was supposed to go first to Dravuni with 121 passengers and 14 crew members. On the way, the boat encountered quite heavy weather and she actually lost her engines, the engine turned off during the time that it was going, during the pounding and pitching of the ship. Later on, the ship regained its propulsion power and continued on its voyage.

The heavy weather continued and the pounding experienced at the forward end of the ship lead to the vessel losing its ramp, this happened at about quarter to five in the morning of the 19th April 2019. The ship captain briefed his crew of the situation and the passengers on the safety procedures at about 5 o'clock that morning. He assessed the situation and had a discussion with the Acting CEO of MSAF calling through his mobile telephone informing MSAF that the ship was stable and that water was freely washing through its strain port that means the water was coming in and going out on the side. He also stated that they had adjusted the ship's course to ride the waves at

slow speed towards Kavala Bay in Kadavu and it arrived at Kavala Bay, Vunivaivai Jetty at 6 p.m. on 19th April, 2019 and all passengers were safely disembarked at around 6.45 p.m.

It was an issue of great concern for us, I think all of us were glad to see that no one's life was lost. In terms of the things that need to be undertaken in regard to this Maritime Safety, MSAF is now looking to try to focusing on the high safety standards and we are now looking to the implementation of the Safe Ship Management Systems for all operators. This Safe Ship Management System is currently being used by some operators but not all.

So, in July of this year we will make it mandatory that this Safe Ship Management System is implemented where the responsibilities of ship owners and everyone that has a responsibility on the boat is clearly articulated, the policies are laid out that everyone knows what they need to do. This Safe Ship Management System is an international requirement under the Safety of Life at Sea Convention and we are looking to now implement this for all the shipping companies to ensure the safety of ships, crew and preservation of our marine environment.

In this Safe Shipment Management System, it has the details of all the safety policies, the practice and the procedures that are to be followed in order to ensure safe functioning of ships at sea and all commercial vessels are required to establish this Safe Ship Management Procedures. So, by July of this year, all domestic ships will be required to do this. So, that Mr. Speaker Sir, is just a brief outline on the incident that happened. As I have said that we are glad to see that no lives were lost or people were injured but we just need to make sure that we can strengthen the requirements for safety under the overall leadership of MSAF. Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir.

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

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Honourable Speaker, thank you. A supplementary question. Honourable Speaker, a couple of days before the incident happened the Honourable Qereqeretabua mentioned exactly to the Honourable Minister for Fisheries and Minister for Infrastructure how unsafe this boat was, but she was slaughtered right here. Now, does that mean all of our ships are unsafe now that they have to do Safety Procedures as the Honourable Minister is saying, because this is a serious matter and I am really glad no one got hurt or died.

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

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir. The procedures in MSAF are such that the Enforcement Compliance Officer and his role of checking the ships is done for every trip. But every six months these ships have to undergo a survey. There is actually a survey that is done and there is a more intense one, a more full one that is done after every one year. So, there are systems in place that should be picking up whether or not the ships are safe in terms of their structural integrity. We do have an issue and I know that some of the ships are quite old and this is one of the issues that we are thinking about, maybe looking at what needs to be done to strengthen the management of ships that are fairly older.

One of the things that we have been discussing in Government, in terms of these ships and the franchise, they are franchise ships. So, one of the things that we are looking at is to change the franchise requirements to make it such that we might extend the contract. When you have a franchise opening up for Kadavu, Lau or for Vanua Levu, normally the contracts are just given for one year. When you are given a one-year contract, it is not going to be very easy for the person winning the contract to go and invest in getting a new ship because the duration of the contract is quite short. So, one of the things that we are looking to now is to extend that duration of these contracts and this will encourage those that are winning the contracts to look for maybe newer ships, better ships so that we

can bring in newer ships into the country. That is one of the things that we will be looking to do especially for the franchise scheme.

We will also be looking to strengthen the way in which we look at the welding structures, the integrity of the welding which will need x-ray machines. MSAF will also been looking to review and update its Standard Operating Procedures and also those on all of these ships. The Safe Ship Management System requires all of these boats to have their own SOPs and the responsibilities of the Captain and the Master of the Ship are very well specified and everyone is expected to carry out their roles. So, all of these to the end of trying to make sure that the maritime travelling public is kept safe at all times.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Honourable Minister assure this House that MSAF personnel are actually doing their job because it appears here they are not and in a boat that I came to, they were using pulleys to lift up the ramp. So, how effective or how can be guarantee to this House that the MSAF personnel are doing their job properly?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Minister.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I actually as a Minister I do not go and check the performance of each of the people that works in MSAF but what we tend to do we tend to look out the outcomes in terms of the records of the accidents and so forth. That gives us an indication whether things are getting worse or getting better.

MSAF is an entity that Government has established. It has a board, it has a governance structure, it has managers, there is a Performance Management System (PMS) and it has to comply with the standards that are established by the International Maritime Organisation. It is all these Conventions that it needs to apply to.

Obviously, all of that, the governance structure, the international standards, the PMS within the organisation, they are supposed to guarantee the integrity of all the ships that travel because that is what is there for. As a Minister, I have a responsibility to make sure that happens and I work through the Board to try to make sure that MSAF is able to carry out its role to the best of its ability and if it is not doing that, from where I see it, then we will do something to try to improve that in their best interest of the safety of the travelling public.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Lynda Tabuya you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. Now with regards to the franchise business knowing that the whole business of shipping, especially inter-island is quite uneconomical, when is the Government going to increase the subsidies as it promised from the 1st January this year for all these shipping companies that are under the franchise deal?

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

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The current franchise will expire around September this year so there will be, I think, the calling out for tenders for the new franchise and as part of that process, the review of the franchise rates are being considered at the moment to take into account obviously operational costs have risen since the rates were put in initially.

As I had mentioned also what we want to do is to see how we can encourage ship owners to bring in new ships, rather than bringing in these old 25 former fishing boats for them to become passenger ships that sail out, especially to the small islands of Lau, Kadavu maybe, Yasawa and the Northern part of Vanua Levu. So it is very difficult to get those new ships.

Hopefully, one of the strategies that we have is to have longer contracts and some incentives in terms of the new franchise rates, it would encourage people to invest in better ships so there can be more safety for people travelling to the maritime islands.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will move on to the next question, for the first Written Question today, I give the floor to the Honourable Inosi Kuridrani to ask his question.

Written Questions

ALTA Resettlement Programme for Former ALTA Tenants (Question No. 104/2019)

HON. I. KURIDRANI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment update Parliament on the current status of the ALTA Resettlement Programme for ex-ALTA tenants?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under the Standing Order 45(3). Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- For the second Written Question, I give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua to ask his question.

Development Plans to Upgrade Facilities in Navua Town (Question No. 105/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development update Parliament on the progress with regards to the development plans in place to upgrade the facilities in Navua to become a fully-fledged town?

HON. P.D. KUMAR (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government Housing and Community Development).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later Sitting date as permitted under the Standing Order 45(3).

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. For the third Written Question for today, I now give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Filipe Tuisawau to ask Written Question No. 106/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

WAF Capital Projects – Status of Implementation (Question No. 106/2019)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services update Parliament on the status of the implementation of the Water Authority of Fiji's Capital Projects, particularly?

- a) How many are ongoing;
- b) How many have been completed;
- c) What is the source of funding for each project; and
- d) What is the timeline for completion?

HON. J. USAMATE (Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Members, the question time is now over.

Honourable Members, we will have a late start tomorrow as I have already pointed out. We will be starting at 10.30 a.m. to enable Honourable Members to attend the ceremonies of welcome so we are going to adjourn now, but before we do, I just want to remind Honourable Members about your mobile phones. When you come into the House, you should switch it off or put it on a low tone.

We had a similar incident to what happened yesterday when I was the Speaker in the House of Representatives, it happened in the same area. In those days, the House was not air-conditioned, it was open and the Honourable Member from a small island in Vanua Levu, very tall gentleman, came in just after lunch, sat down and put his bag on the floor. I had given the warning about turning mobile phones off just before lunch.

We sat down for the afternoon session and his mobile phone went off and everyone started looking around, including him, and the sound was coming from his bag. When he realised it was his phone, he picked up his bag, leant over and he threw it straight out the window, in the process he fell completely over in his chair and onto the floor and we all could see were his two long legs up in the air and the bottoms of his sandals on top of the table.

(Laughter)

Well, I cannot tell you what the lady Honourable Member's comments in Fijian were who was from the same Party (a lady from Lau) when she witnessed him spread-eagled on the floor and table because otherwise, I will be guilty of unparliamentary language. His instant counter to her comments, also in Fijian, were also most unparliamentary. But the Member did not get up to acknowledge the Speaker before leaving the House, but crawled surreptitiously out of the House and once outside crouching very low as he proceeded along the verandah and down the front steps into the lawn to retrieve his mobile. He did not appear again until after the afternoon tea break.

(Laughter)

We adjourn until tomorrow at 10.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 8.38. p.m.