

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

WEDNESDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 2019

[CORRECTED COPY]

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WEDNESDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 2019

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

The Honourable Speaker took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable V. Prakash and the Honourable Ro T.V. Kepa.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Tuesday, 6th August, 2019, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, 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 Tuesday, 6th August, 2019 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Nays')

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, there being no opposition, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

I welcome all Honourable Members to today's sitting. I also take this opportunity to welcome the students and teachers from Nukui Village School. You are most welcome to Parliament and I hope that your visit today will be rewarding and fruitful.

(Acclamation)

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

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry, the Honourable Josasia Voreqe Bainimarama to table his Reports. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. In accordance with the Standing Order 38, I present the following Reports to Parliament:

1. Sugar Cane Growers Fund Annual Reports for 2009 to 2017;
2. Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Reports for 2011 to 2015;
3. Sugar Research Institute of Fiji Annual Reports for 2008 to 2015;
4. Fiji Sugar Corporation Limited Annual Reports for 2007 to 2018;
5. Sugar Cane Growers Council Annual Reports for 2007 to 2017;
6. Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Reports for 2012 to 2016; and
7. Office of the President Annual Report 2016 to July 2017.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

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

1. Sugar Cane Growers Fund Annual Reports for 2009 to 2017;
2. Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Reports for 2011 to 2015;
3. Sugar Research Institute of Fiji Annual Reports for 2008 to 2015;
4. Fiji Sugar Corporation Limited Annual Reports for 2007 to 2018;
5. Sugar Cane Growers Council Annual Reports for 2007 to 2017; and
6. Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Reports for 2012 to 2016.

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Office of the President's Annual Report 2016 to July 2017 to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights.

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications, the Honourable Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum to table his Reports.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. In accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the following Reports to Parliament:

1. Media Industry Development Authority of Fiji Consolidated Annual Report 2010 to 2018; and
2. Reserve Bank of Fiji Insurance Annual Report 2018.

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

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Media Industry Development Authority of Fiji Consolidated Annual Report 2010 to 2018 to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Reserve Bank of Fiji Insurance Annual Report 2018 to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

Honourable Members, I now call on the Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development, the Honourable Premila Kumar, to table her Reports. You have the floor, Madam.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Honourable Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the Film Fiji 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports to Parliament. Thank you.

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

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Film Fiji 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

Thank you, Honourable Members, we will proceed to the next Item.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Economic Affairs - Review of the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation 2016 and 2017 Annual Reports

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

HON. V. NATH.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I am pleased to present the consolidated report of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs on the annual review of the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation 2016 and 2017 Annual Reports.

For the years 2016 and 2017, FBC has performed exceptionally well and the Committee is pleased with the various initiatives the team at FBC has undertaken to achieve high standard in the very competitive environment that they function in. Based on a survey by the Australian-based Pulse Insights, more than 72 percent of Fijians said that the daily 7.00 p.m. FBC News is their preferred news source on television and that over 74 percent of Fijians regard FBC as their favourite commercial channel. This is an indication of FBC's dedication towards service excellence.

The Committee acknowledges the agreement signed between JICA, FBC and the Government which enabled the installation of the state-of-the-art high-powered Amplitude Modulation (AM) facilities at the FBC's Naulu transmission site. This is most beneficial to Fijians in the rural and maritime islands, especially during the time of natural disasters.

Further to this, the Committee noted that FBC had taken a loan of \$22 million in 2014 and acknowledges that the debt now stands at \$13 million, which reflects a positive conduct of account. The Committee was also pleased to note the variety of local content on offer and recommended that they continue towards enhancing their local productions, especially addressing social issues. The Committee commends the overall performance of the company.

Finally, I would like to thank our Committee Members who were part of the team that produced this Report, namely:

1. Honourable Veena Bhatnagar - Deputy Chairperson;
2. Honourable George Vegenathan;
3. Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau; and
4. Honourable Inosi Kuridrani.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Parliamentary staff who have given us invaluable support.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I commend the Consolidated Report on Fiji Broadcasting Corporation 2016 and 2017 to Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion without notice:

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

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

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

The Question is:

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

Does any Member oppose?

(Chorus of 'Nays')

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

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

1. Honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs;
2. Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment; and
3. Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications.

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

Honourable Members, I now call upon the Honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Inia Seruiratu, to deliver his Statement. You have the floor, Sir.

Fighting Crime and the War Against Drugs in Fiji

HON. LT. COL. I. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Members of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen; I rise to deliver my Ministerial Statement where I will be focussing on two issues that I know have gained a lot of attention because they affect not only the individual and our communities but our beloved nation. It is on fighting crime and the war against drugs in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I may be addressing this august House in my capacity as Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs but more importantly as a Fijian citizen who cares about our beloved nation and the future of our children and grandchildren, to call for a whole of nation approach towards fighting crime and supporting law enforcement efforts in the war against drugs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to put things right with regards to the crime situation as there has been a lot of attention both by the mainstream media and on social media about its spiralling out of control, which in turn has impacted public perception that Fiji is being overrun by criminals.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do acknowledge that certain criminal activities have drawn the nation's interest on the recent spate of robberies, burglaries and gender-based violence along with drugs, that has captured the imagination of all Fijians. I am pleased that the Honourable Prime Minister and respectable members of the community have duly voiced their concern on gender-based violence and the drug situation in our country. I duly applaud the Honourable Prime Minister to have cited for meaningful community partnerships where responsible citizens are taking ownership and extending assistance to the Fiji Police Force.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the power of the media and social media was evident following the posting of the video showing the attacks along Victoria Parade which has painted Suva and Fiji, as a nation, that it is unsafe. The barrage of exchanges on social media calling for more proactive measures by police have been supported by members of the Opposition, and just the other day, the Honourable Lynda Tabuya called for another police post to be erected along Victoria Parade.

The question I would like to pose, not only to Members of the Opposition, but to every Fijian is, will erecting more police posts prevent robberies and attacks that are allegedly being fuelled by drugs? Is having more police patrols on the ground going to prevent another 1,634 primary and secondary school children becoming victims of drug-related cases such as those reported in schools in 2018? Is having more police officers the solution to reducing the domestic violence rate which has recorded a 35 percent increase between the periods of January to June this year, and will it help reduce crimes against women and children that have recorded increases of 2 percent and 1 percent respectively, and prevent another innocent child or woman from becoming a victim of gender-based violence in their own homes?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is why the Honourable Prime Minister has and continues to call for support to help police fight crime. I stand in support of this, not as the Minister for Defence and National Security to get the spotlight of our police force, but because it is the right thing to do.

The brazen attacks out in public and robberies as alluded to by the Honourable Prime Minister are likely linked to the increase in drug-related activities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is our duty to ensure that we speak facts in this august House and while the issue of crime certainly is an effective means of gaining political mileage, we owe it to the people we serve to speak on facts.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not here to give a long-winded address to try and justify law enforcement shortfalls based on any particular case, but I want to state that the reality on the ground is that Fiji is still safer in comparison to many other countries. But, of course, we need to act and act now and be more proactive and take responsibility equally.

The Commissioner of Police has publicly stated on numerous occasions that statistics on crimes are easily available. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the crime statistics for 2018, very interesting reading and available to the public and, of course, to Members of this august House, but I will not go in with statistics. Economists love statistics, not me.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to say again that the Commissioner has stated on numerous occasions that statistics on crimes are available and one just needs to pick up the phone and request for a copy. Many on the Opposition side have forgotten or have deliberately chosen to forget, but the fact is that the crime situation in Fiji is not as alarming as many have thought it to be. The statistics captured by the Fiji Police Force on reported crimes depict otherwise. In that, the January to June 2019 data in comparison to the same period in 2018 demonstrates decreasing trends.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there has not been any sudden upward surge of crime in a short span of time. In fact, if we look at the crimes statistics for the periods of January to June this year, overall crime has reduced by 8 percent while serious crime is down by 4 percent, and steps are being taken by police in our city and town councils through the Director of Local Government, to find long-term solutions that can effectively keep these crime trends down.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, having goods on the ground may result in the reduction of robberies and theft in the short term, but we have to find workable and long-term solutions as well, solutions that include improving lighting in Suva along areas that are prone to opportunistic crimes and by this weekend, as assured by the Director of Local Government and his team, these areas will be well-lit and Suva's nightlife will be safer for all to move around safely. Collaboration on where the 20 new Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras will be installed in a few weeks' time, is also ongoing between the Suva City Council (SCC) and Police so that the cameras complement the work of law enforcement agencies.

Later this week, the patrol car concept will be reintroduced in Suva where reports can be attended to in a timely manner, as I know that the response time has been an issue. Mr. Speaker, Sir, discussions will also be held to link up the existing CCTV cameras to a central location where police can view and monitor the streets of Suva.

I acknowledge with gratitude the Suva Retailers Association's public declaration in that they are willing to contribute financially to the purchase of more security cameras. This afternoon, Mr. Speaker, Sir, nightclub operators and their security personnel will be called in for a joint meeting with the police and the SCC to iron out issues of concern with regards to the safety of their patrons.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as Government's focus on enhancing national security has paid dividends and aided Suva's economic growth, we would ask that the business community exercise their corporate social responsibility by assisting police in investing in these cost-effective but long term solutions that can contribute to creating a safer environment for their customers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to share sentiments on the national narcotics and illicit drugs both green and synthetic in Fiji. I do acknowledge and concur with the Honourable Prime Minister that the

illicit drugs situation in Fiji needs a collaborative and more cohesive effort from all segments of our society. We have noted that hard drugs have found a transit point for our neighbours, particularly from Australia and New Zealand. Likewise, *cannabis sativa* or *marijuana*, have found very strong cultivation presence in Kadavu and, of course, in the triangle in Vanua Levu and, of course, in Navosa; they continue to harvest and supply the Fijian market.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in curbing this, the Fiji Police Force would need rigorous collaborated operational strategy as well as surveillance and newer methods such as biological control measures. Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the offset, drugs recorded an increase of 13 percent in June, 2019 when compared to the same period last year. This may not depict the actual rise but it is a reflection of the police and concerted joint stakeholder efforts by police, the Fiji Navy, Fiji Customs and Immigration, the Republic of Fiji Military Forces and the Fiji Revenue and Customs Services.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the recent discovery of transponders and numerous blocks of hard drugs in our inland shores indicate our vulnerability to drug trade routes. To overcome this vulnerability, Sir, the Government has funded the purchase of new intercept boats to strengthen law enforcement presence on the seas and last week, the collaboration between the police and the Fiji Navy was again realised when the *RFNS Kikau* was deployed to retrieve transponders and suspicious containers found in one of our far lying groups of islands, with the retrieval process completed in less than 10 hours of when the information of the discovery was received.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, controlling our borders will always be a challenge, one that Fiji is confronting alone. In Government's endeavour to fight against this cross-border crime, the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service has taken serious steps to have a virtual border control system to profile passengers, cargo and crafts before they enter Fiji.

Some of the real time initiatives include the introduction of Non-Intrusive Inspection equipment at both the sea ports in Suva and Lautoka, further extending the scanning of parcels at the postal agencies and further supported with the Fiji Drug Detector Dog Unit which provides enhanced opportunity to comprehend the illicit drug trade.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the capacity development and engagement between the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service and local and regional law enforcement has resulted in the success of the Detector Dog Unit based in Suva and Nadi International Airport has intercepted cases of hard drugs from 2017 to 2019 with a street value of \$63 million and \$90.9 million in social cost.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the point I am trying to drive here as a Fijian citizen that cares about Fiji.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. LT.COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- I ask that we put aside our differences for a minute and think about how we can work together for the sake of our Fiji.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- I have made this statement at every speaking opportunity that I have been given because everyone needs to understand that national security is economic security. It is our security, it is our economy, it is for the benefit of our Fiji that we need to work together.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not an issue that we should be taking sides on. When it comes to crime, we should be united in helping our law enforcement agencies.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- This is why it is imperative for us to work together to examine the root causes of why children are loitering in town or why there are more than 1,600 young people linked to drug cases in our schools and why women and children continue to be victimised in their own homes.

Just as the Commissioner has stated that they are going back to the basics, so should we work together to examine why the family institution is failing in providing the necessary support and guidance to prevent the commission of these serious crimes.

We need to focus on the family, Mr. Speaker, Sir. A strong family will contribute towards a strong community and a strong community will build a strong nation ...

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- ...and this is why we need to focus on the family institutions. This is the real issue at hand, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and we are in a position to effect change.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is our Fiji, and our home. No one will come from outside to solve our issues. We have to work together because just as crime does not discriminate, I will urge Members of this august House to put aside our differences and help support the efforts of law enforcement agencies in tackling all forms of crime.

I wish to also assure this august House, Honourable Speaker, Sir, that this is not only focusing on Suva, but we are equally drawing attention and effort on the other municipalities as well and in my visits to the divisions, I have also asked for the opportunity to have meetings with the local communities, particularly the business communities in these respective municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we need to change the mindset that fighting crime is for law enforcement agencies and in this august House, we can show what unity can achieve for the sake of a crime and drug-free Fiji for our children and the many generations to come.

Government, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is backing the war on drugs and we need everyone's support before it becomes a real menace to our society and economy. I thank you, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister for his Statement.

Honourable Members, as I indicated earlier, I now give the floor to the Leader of the Opposition. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. First of all, I would like to commend the Honourable Minister for his Statement. I am sure that the Minister understands that when it compels a Minister to make a Ministerial Statement, it means that the Government acknowledges the state of crisis or a time to celebrate.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, "A stitch in time saves nine". Mr. Speaker, Sir, the drug issue has exploded, but before it exploded, there were drips - little springs coming up from the ground or leaks on the roof. It is sad that we have arrived at this stage.

The Honourable Minister, Mr. Speaker, Sir, talking about doing this now for the future. The future started years ago, and that is why I say - a stitch in time saves nine. We are all aware that there had been some so-called “drug busts”.

Unfortunately, we have not seen while we do not want to interfere with the machinery of the disciplinary arms of Government and the Judiciary, we tend to anticipate follow-up actions on such little busts. When those are not forthcoming, we ask, and when we get to a stage where the Honourable Minister or a Minister is compelled to make a national statement in the national assembly, it means that we are in dire straits.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not criticising the Government, it is our joint effort in maintaining national discipline, our national respect for law and order. There have been many issues that we relate to Human Rights, Fundamental Rights, Children’s Rights - they all relate to imparting a sense of discipline, not enforcing a sense of discipline on our children and our young people.

Unfortunately, those communal and community, societal, societies and schools, et cetera, they are machinery to instil discipline but have been degraded by so-called rights. What about now? We are talking about the rights of the nation to have a proper and respectable standard of national discipline. If we try and instil that sense using whatever facilities that are available to us in the family, schools, villages, communities and the church, we should not be confronted with an issue as big as this.

We are all victims of the trend; we are all victims of this imposition of the use of drugs into our communities. Initially, it was the over-use of *yaqona*, alcohol and then *marijuana*, now into hard drugs. I commend the Minister for his Statement; I commend the police for the work that they are trying to do; and other aspects of enforcing discipline, but if we can just relook at our whole social structure, Mr. Speaker, Sir, where we can instil discipline at a very young age so that we ensure maximum discipline, when we get older, I am sure we will solve the future problems. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Members, I thank the Leader of the Opposition and I now give the floor to his designate. You have the floor, Honourable Pio Tikoduadua.

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for his Ministerial Statement with regards to the crisis regarding the drug issue that we are currently facing in Fiji at the moment, and in particular, he also went on to mention some of the measures that the government has done, and put in place to try and curb this problem.

More so, Honourable Speaker, I would like to concentrate my short reply to the Honourable Minister’s Statement to the bit where at the end, the Minister is calling for a national solution for all of our participation on this matter because definitely, Honourable Minister, this is a matter that will affect our children in the future because it is actually affecting our children now and if not addressed properly, can carry on to their children and grandchildren thereafter.

So the solution must be to curb it now. No amount of ministerial statement or statements or expressions made in this House is going to stop what is going on in the streets. The Minister is calling for national action - our collective action.

Honourable Speaker, the action starts in this House. The action to curb drugs starts with our national leaders. That means it calls for our national leadership of our Parliament, not only of government, the government is reaching across the House, it is reaching across the nation so, we, as a Parliament must come up with a national solution to curb this problem, and in particular, I commend the Minister where towards the end of his Statement, he says that there is value for unity, what unity can achieve for Fiji. It

is a unity of action, not a unity of words. Like he said, we know the extent of what we face, no amount of our debate or pointing at each other is going to solve it for our children.

Last Sunday night I drove into Nausori, there was a little girl standing on the street, sniffing on a piece of cloth and I said, “Hey, what’s that thing? Where are you from?” She said, “I am from down here”, I said, “All right, what are you doing, what are you holding?” She said, “I am sniffing a bit of glue”.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- From Tailevu

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Yes, she is probably from Tailevu, and I do not deny it. I am just saying, Honourable Speaker, no amount of what we throw at each other is going to save a good future that is without drugs for the children who are here. So, this is calling for a national solution and like I said, it is here.

I ask the Government that on Friday, we will move a motion, under Standing Order 129 for a Special Parliamentary Select Committee to look at this from across the House, let us start with that. I am asking for the Government’s goodwill and good spirit, show good leadership because only good leadership is going to solve this.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition spoke about menace and discipline, only leadership is going to do it and leadership is with us, it is only up to you to say “yes”. Let us do this together. We have never had the opportunity to have a Select Committee to have a deal with anything. I have raised a few motions in the past but they have all been struck down.

This is a good one, government is reaching out across. We are walking not only to the centre of this House but we are going to come across. Let us raise a solution for our children and I invite the Government that when I raise this motion in the House, let it start with us. Let us kill this drug problem and then we will give these children the future that they deserve. That is something that we are going to harp about in this House and then it actually means nothing for them in the future. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member for his Statement.

Honourable Members, we will move on and I now call upon the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment, the Honourable Dr. Mahendra Reddy, to deliver his Ministerial Statement. You have the floor, Sir.

Update on the Department of Environment’s Activities

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Honourable Members: I thank you very much for this opportunity to give this Ministerial Statement in regards to an update on the Department of Environment’s activities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji’s growing global environment brand directly impacts our economy. Our pristine environment, white sandy beaches, blue oceans and our environmental leadership, all are some of our unique, salient points internationally. Our Ministry has taken indubitable strides towards protecting Fiji’s environment. The Ministry, whilst enforcing, also will continue to ensure that environmental protection does not hurdle business investments.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Section 40(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji states, I quote:

“Every person has the right to a clean and healthy environment, which includes the right to have the natural world protected for the benefit of present and future generations through legislative and other measures.”

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our Ministry, through the Department of Environment, continues to enforce the Environmental Management Act, 2005; the Ozone Depleting Substance Act, 1998; the Endangered and Protected Species Act, 2002; and the Litter Act, 1998. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the legislative framework that we drive our power from when we undertake all that within the Department of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the main purpose of the Environmental Management Act, 2005 is to protect Fiji's natural resources and for the control and management of developments and waste management pollution control.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as provided for in the Constitution, it is our obligation and duty to leave the state of environment as our forefathers had left it for us in the same condition and state for the future generations. We, in the Ministry, are overseers and regulators. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we protect our environment, to maintain, control and ensure the sustainable use of our natural resources.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a tool to use to identify the environmental, social and economical impacts of any project prior to decision-making, and are used to predict environmental impacts, potential degradation at an early stage of a project, find ways to reduce adverse impacts, shape projects to suit the local environment and present the predictions and options to decisions-makers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in economics, we say that we try our best to derive a parental primal solution where no one is worse-off by someone's benefits.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Department of Environment administers the EIA process for all development applications received, pursuant to section 4 of the Environmental Management Act, 2005. Mr. Speaker, Sir, for development projects as provided for in the Environment Management EIA Process Regulations and the EIA Guidelines, developers and investors are required to submit applications to the Department who will then undertake a detailed perusal of the proposal to decide whether an EIA is required or not, and if it is required, the Department will then provide a terms of reference for the EIA.

For the last fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Department of Environment approved 80 EIA reports; while 40 EIA reports were declined; 57 prohibition notices were issued by the Department. Mr. Speaker, Sir, for breaches under the Environment Management Act, 2005, the Environment Management EIA Process Regulation, 2007; and for breaches of EIA, approval conditions were issued to seven proponents.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not an arbitrary process, this is not a template-driven exercise. Terms of reference differs with reference to the nature of the development projects, as well as the size of the project or the environment and socio-economic scenario of the area at which the proposed project is to be constructed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, contrary to what some mischief-makers are saying, this is not a template-driven process, this is not an arbitrary process. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Department regulates waste discharges, disposals and emissions from all commercial facilities in the country pursuant to Part 5 of the Environmental Management Act 2005. A commercial facility under the Environmental Management Act 2005, Mr. Speaker, Sir, referenced to individual including Government, who engage in providing a service to any other activities undertaken for financial gains. The Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of Forestry submits their project.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, within the Ministry of Waterways and Environment, the Department of Waterways projects are formally submitted to the Department of Environment for screening.

The Ministry of Agriculture submits their screened applications to the Ministry of Waterways and Environment for their decision, whether the *EIA* must be undertaken, or even if it is to be undertaken, what is the terms of reference.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, every commercial facility in Operations is required to hold a valid disposal permit with conditions from the Department of Environment. There are several waste disposal permits issued by the Department, depending on the nature of the operation of the facility.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the last financial year, the Department of Environment issued a total of 147 permits and a total of 10 prohibition notices were issued for breaches under the Environmental Management Act 2005 and the Environmental Management Waste Disposal and Recycling Regulations 2007. Three of these notices, Mr. Speaker, Sir, were for breaching the conditions of waste disposal permits issued by the Department while seven were for illegal dumping.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have obtained the list of hotels and other industrial operations from FRCS, and we are now matching that with our list to see who all carry a waste disposal permit and who does not. The Audit exercise is already revealing that a particular group of business operators (around 90 percent of them) do not carry a waste disposal permit. We have met them and they argued that they have a valid licence to operate their business. Are they at fault?

Well, there was a disconnect between the Department offering business licences and the Department offering waste permits back then when these operations started, what do we do? Do we go and close those operations down? Certainly not, we go and work with them to ensure they are now putting all the requirements in place. If they do not have them in place, then we offer them a permit. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is the way to go, the Department is a facilitator, a regulator.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Department who appoints Litter Prevention Officers also enforces the Litter Act 2008, which regulates the deposit of litter in public places. Those who litter in public, Mr. Speaker, Sir, will be charged for \$40 fine, and failure to pay will result in court proceeding.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Department of Environment in the last financial year appointed and trained 355 Litter Prevention Officers to help enforce the Litter Act 2008. Now, we intend to appoint part-time paid Litter Prevention Officers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our Ministry has a national focal point to the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete ozone layer and regulates the Ozone Depleting Substances Act 1998 and its Regulations 2010.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our Ministry focusses on monitoring the use of gases that deplete the ozone layer through its licensing and permitting system. Mr. Speaker, Sir, our Ministry is currently monitors 487 registered companies and 1,335 technicians who are users of ozone depleting gases.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the last fiscal year, the Department of Environment issued 73 new licences to handle controlled-substances and 24 new storage permits. In addition to this, 451 technician licences, 211 company storage renewals were issued and 27 approvals have been issued in the last fiscal year to registered importers on the importation of ozone depleting gases.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am providing these details so that Honourable Members on the other side understand the variety of work that the Department of Environment is doing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in addition to this, the Department of Environment conducted seven good practices in refrigeration training - three Australian Fumigation Aggregated Skills Training, three hydro carbon trainings and four trainings for Enforcement Officers in conjunction with the Fiji National University (FNU), Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) and the Fiji Revenue and Customs Services (FRCS).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the main purpose of these trainings is to ensure that the industrial enforcement agencies are well trained and have the capacity to deal with ozone-depleting substance gases and its replacement.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have also provided the industry with the assistance in terms of certain equipment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am informed that during the fiscal year that just gone by, the Department processed over 1,600 permits and approvals, serving over 2,000 potential clients and supported potential developments worth a little over \$2 million.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while assisting its role as a regulator, the Department also enumerates itself as a customer-friendly, business-friendly output. This does not mean that environmental laws should be compromised, absolutely not!

On the other hand, the Department will advise and handhold its applicant customers through the process. This effort is evident from the recent launch of the exclusive Customer Care Unit at the Department. The friendly willing team at the Unit stands ready to support and guide applicants through the permitting process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Department has, over last year, designed and rolled out a unique customer outreach programme called Business Roundtable. This is a proactive approach, Mr. Speaker, Sir, so that we will let them self-regulate themselves.

The Department of Environment in the last year has seen a steep increase in its focus on private sector being the main source of economic growth, community income and jobs. The Department has sought to partner with the private sector to achieve faster and more sustainable development outreach. This roundtable prudent focusses on engaging with the private sector, helping resolve issues through dialogue and awareness raising.

In the coming weeks and months, the Department will engage a lot more with the resource owners and communities through the National Environment Council (NEC), a legislative body under the Environment Management Act 2005.

Our Ministry recognises the healthy ecosystem provided for healthy people in a healthy nation. For this reason, Mr. Speaker, Sir, our Ministry, through various policies and international conventions implements programmes to ensure protection and management of Fiji's important ecosystem and species.

In recognising that Fiji's unique biodiversity underpins economic and social prosperity of a small island nation, our Ministry aims to protect species from extinction by regulating trade in wildlife species from national global significance, making sure that species are substantially and legally required from the wild, and traders are registered to be trained in the species so that we have complete data on what is traded, what is the volume of trade, what is the existing stock on the ground.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Endangered and Protected Species Act 2002 aims to regulate and control the international trade, domestic trade, possession and transportation of species protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the last fiscal year, our Ministry has issued 161 export permits, 32 import permits, refused to and registered 17 companies under the Endangered and Protected Species Act 2002.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Department of Environment continues to raise public awareness on the importance of Fiji's biodiversity and has taken rigorous approach in consulting with our stakeholders on key regulatory requirements under the various environmental laws.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, numerous workshops and roundtable consultations, enforcement trainings and media campaigns have been conducted to improve the public's understanding of Fiji's environment and biodiversity and how individuals can co-operate in addressing challenges.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I get numerous complaints that we are slow, we do not understand the business scenario and business model. But when I go and talk to them, then they get to understand the full and bigger picture.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in addition, our Ministry has already working towards establishing a protected area, the registration system to enhance management and reporting of Fiji's National Protected Area (PA) commitments and obligations under the Convention on biological diversity.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our Ministry is keen to work with all partners in this new fiscal year, and is looking forward to genuine, sustainable and transparent working partnership. Our Ministry will encourage one and all to be proud of our rich environment heritage that defines us; our beautiful country we live in, and let us keep Fiji beautiful.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we need a collective approach, we need to do this together.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members: I thank you for your time and thank you for listening to this Statement. *Vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I thank the Minister for his Ministerial Statement. I now give the floor to the Leader of the Opposition's designated speaker, Honourable Lynda Tabuya. You have the floor, Madam.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I would like to acknowledge the Statement that has been given by the Honourable Minister. Yes, he is right, the Department of Environment does manage the Environmental Management Act 2005, as well as the Litter Act 2008 and the Department is given the powers to investigate and prosecute individuals and companies that are causing damage to the environment, specifically a whole lots of sections from Section 42 onwards on the power to inspect, the power to stop work, power to investigate, power to bring charges. Then, of course, under the Litter Act, you can have Litter Officers and litter offences created under the Act.

Now, I ask the Honourable Minister, why have there not been more people or companies prosecuted under these Acts? No wonder, people have labelled the Department as slow. It has been 10 years to 15 years since these laws are in place, but no measurable improvements on prosecution under these laws.

If the Government is as serious as it is, about being a climate champion, why have we not heard any responsibility for the demise of the Southern Phoenix that is sitting right here in front of us in the Harbour, leaking sorts of toxic substances and polluting our waters - no word of it as to any action under these Acts.

If the Government is as serious about being a climate champion and they continue to rhetoric about reducing greenhouse emissions then, please, tell us why they do not turn off the engines of their Government vehicles sitting right outside that door. We preach and educate about eradicating ozone depleting substances, carbon monoxide is a huge culprit and here we are still talking about and still asking them to, please, turn off their engines. We asked the reasons, "Oh, if there is any emergency, the engine is ready to go." We are all in emergency, we can turn on our engines, it is ready to go so, please, can we start right here. Our children are here, they will not believe us if they know the engines are running outside so, please, practise what you are trying to preach.

HON. MEMBER.- The driver.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- If the Government is as serious as being climate champions, then we should not see regular eyesore of piles and piles of rubbish in our informal and squatter settlements. I commend the initiatives of the communities. We have got companies like the BSP Bank, who do regular clean ups and they support community groups who do so.

I commend the REDD+ Programme, 4 million trees in four years, how about a plastic minus programme? Collect 1 million plastic items of litter in one month. I commend groups, like the Nasinu Youth and the Nasinu Rugby Union for organising clean-ups in their neighbourhoods.

A 2013 ADB Report says that the City of Suva alone (and I have mentioned this before) produces 65 tonnes of rubbish a day, and a lot ends up in the ocean. Maybe, in my lifetime by 2050, reports will show that there will be more rubbish than fish in the ocean. We should be worried about that if we are trying to talk about food security.

I commend the Government for their initiatives on banning plastic bags, plastic straws and polystyrenes and takeaway boxes by 1st January, 2020. I also commend the Government for the decision to remove all the duty on import of biodegradable packaging, but I ask the Honourable Minister, the Clean Environment Policy that he introduced in February, where is it? When are you going to implement it? It has been six months, and we are still waiting for that policy.

To conclude, the theme today has been about unity, working together but also about action. Action, action, action! So many policies, only as good as the actions to show your commitment. Turn off your engines, collect the rubbish and implement the Policy!

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I thank the Honourable Member for her statement.

I now give the floor to the designated speaker for the National Federation Party, the Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- It is all right. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

(Laughter)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Honourable Speaker, I wish to thank the Honourable Minister for his Statement. I am encouraged that finally we are hearing more of his Ministry's endeavours on the importance of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) because this is one of the aspects of environmental management that his Ministry certainly needs to upgrade with priority. And, Honourable Speaker, the issue of EIAs is where I want to focus my response this morning.

If we can recall the urgency of the Honourable Prime Minister when on the 4th April, this year, he highlighted the issue of rogue police officers and the highly worrying saga on Malolo by FreeSoul, but also we were promised a law.

These were the words promised to us by the Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Speaker, and I quote:

“... That is why, Mr. Speaker, we have been considering a law which we will urgently introduce in the next session of Parliament to permanently ban companies that blatantly disregard our environmental laws and protection.”

We are still waiting for that law, Honourable Speaker. There are countless other developments happening right now that are of major cause for concern, and the EIAs are our first point of reference when these discrepancies arise. The most pressing priority of the Ministry, Honourable Speaker, should be to show, like the Honourable Tabuya said, show and not tell us the obvious.

Honourable Speaker, with all the interjections coming from the other side, can I just remind this House and the public that only last week, there was a photograph of an Honourable Minister releasing helium-filled balloons into the atmosphere. What are we talking about here? What are we talking about? Show, not tell!

The Honourable Minister, Honourable Speaker, is well-advised, therefore, to make all EIA documents and reports available online, to save the trees and exemplify transparency in our environmental laws. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

Honourable Members, we will now take an adjournment for morning tea. After morning tea, we will hear the third Ministerial Statement. I hope everyone will be rejuvenated by then.

We adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.38 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.14 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will continue with the Ministerial Statements and I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General, Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications, the Honourable Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, to deliver his Ministerial Statement.

You have the floor, Sir.

Implementation of a New Climate Change Act

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform Parliament and the nation of an important new measure that the Fijian Government intends to implement over the coming months to better prepare us for the challenges we face with climate change. It is a Climate Change Act that will enshrine in law our domestic response to the climate threat and the threat to our oceans, and place that law at the heart of our national policies and priorities.

Stretching across the whole of Government and much of the private sector, the necessitating changes to a range of existing legislation, the Act will be comprehensive, holistic and easily understood. It will provide a framework to guide Fiji's implementation of the Paris Agreement, coordinate our national response to climate change and ocean health and give us the legal tools to carry out our most important job of safeguarding the Fijian people and the communities from the climate threat now and into the future.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the work has been underway on this legislation for the past 6 months and we will soon embark on an appropriate period of public consultation on the draft Bill with further input from international experts, to ensure it meets the standard of the world's best practice.

We are in fact one of the few small number of countries in the world to produce such a Bill and right from the start of this process, we have been determined to make it the best. The Climate Bill will be introduced in Parliament in the September session before the United Nations Secretary-General's Climate Summit, with the intention of being enacted into law before COP25 in Chile in December of this year.

We hope that other nations will, of course, emulate it. Some of its provisions have already been announced in the Budget, including measures to reduce plastics pollution; a key threat to our waterways and oceans. These include:

- a ban on all single-use of plastic bags, including those with and without handles from 1st January next year;
- an increase in the plastic levy from 20 cents to 50 cents and low density polyethylene plastic bags from 1st January next year;
- a ban on styrofoam from 1st January 2021, following a series of national consultations and zero-duty on non-plastic food packaging such as straws, containers and cutlery.

Put simply, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fijians need to wean themselves off plastic if we are to improve the health of our oceans on which much of our food and livelihoods depend.

We encourage the use, for instance, of reusable shopping baskets and bags made and woven in particular by Fijian women and artisans. Of course, before the advent of single-use plastic bags, which is only a few decades ago, we all used these reusable or nature-based bags.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before we provide information on some of the other provisions of the Act, we wish to explain its importance, the context in which it is being introduced, and the absolutely imperative with everyone getting behind it.

The Fijian Government seeks cross-party support and indeed national support for this new legislation in Parliament along with the support of every Fijian. Because of any fair appraisal it is responsible, it is balanced and it is necessary in the interest of demonstrating Fiji's resolve and persuading other nations to enact similar laws for climate change and with one voice, support the Climate Act.

Combined with the increase, we intend to make in our Nationally-Determined Contribution (NDC) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, we would be sending the world yet another powerful message that our successful Presidency of COP23 and the unprecedented "*mana*" it gave us in the community of nations was not the end of Fiji's Global Climate Leadership, far from it. It was merely the opening ground of our fight for survival here in the Pacific, at least we intend to keep punching above our weight in the coming years for ourselves and our neighbours.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, after we surrendered the COP Presidency last year, we continued to play a leadership role at COP24 in Poland where our concept of the *Talanoa* dialogue to boost climate ambition was enthusiastically embraced by the nations of the world.

In our own region, our leadership of the Climate Action Pacific Partnership in May has set a new standard of inclusiveness and partnership between Governments, Civil Society and the Private Sector. Next comes the Pacific Islands Forum in Tuvalu next week in which Fiji rejoins the Leaders' Summit, to make the case for more ambition on the power of island States and our larger neighbours.

Then comes the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit in New York next month, where Mr. Guterres has issued a challenge to the whole world to come with plans to increase the 23rd emission targets and achieve carbon-neutral economies by 2050.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, all of us in this Parliament and every Fijian can be proud that we intend to meet this challenge with the revised NDC that we will be taking to New York through the Honourable Prime Minister; a faster transition to renewable energy, more efficient utilisation of our forest and mangroves; nature's carbon capture and a range of innovative mechanisms to achieve the net zero-emission target 31 years from now.

Then comes COP25 in San Diego, Chile, in December where the Honourable Prime Minister will again spearhead our campaign on behalf of the Pacific and other vulnerable nations, as we know that we are also chairing Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) this year.

The Honourable Prime Minister has become an acknowledged statesman in the climate arena. He was on the high level UN panel put together personally by the Secretary-General on ocean with other Heads of States and Governments across the globe, including those from Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Chile, Mexico, Portugal and many others. These are only Heads of States and Heads of Governments.

I am also now in the Global Commission Adaptation that is Chaired by Ban Ki Moon, the former UN Secretary-General and co-chaired by Bill Gates, and the CEO of World Bank. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we must support the Honourable Prime Minister and the rest of the Fijian climate team, as we rise to the

challenge before us over the coming months because if anything Mr. Speaker, that challenge is greater now than ever before.

July, Mr. Speaker, has been the hottest month that the world has ever recorded, and all over the planet there are alarming signs that the climate threat is escalating at a far greater pace than scientists had predicted. The arctic ice is melting faster than we thought; the European summer has seen record temperatures across the continent, including the hottest day ever recorded in the French capital and cradle of the Paris Agreement (42 degrees).

There are more droughts, more floods and more devastating wild fires across the globe, ever more serious impacts on agriculture and the world's ability to feed itself. Here in the vast Pacific sits our beloved Fiji – small, increasingly vulnerable as we scan the horizon anxiously year by year for the kind of extreme weather events that three years ago took the lives of 44 of our loved ones, and inflicted damage equal to 1/3 of the value of our GDP.

And which, God forbid, could be much worse in the event of a direct hit on the whole of Fiji and especially our capital. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is the grave situation in which we find ourselves through no fault of our own and why this Government puts such a strong emphasis on the climate issue. This is our fight for our lives and our livelihoods. There is no room for cynicism, no room for complacency.

We cannot afford climate change fatigue to set in Fiji, because if anything, the outlook is worsening and I have to comment on one thing here. Honourable Qereqeretabua ridiculed the Honourable Minister Reddy for releasing helium-filled balloons, but little did she know nor did she bother to find out, there was actually a release of helium balloons through USP, where they were sending up gadgets attached to this helium balloons to check the level of ozone depletion in our atmosphere.

(Laughter)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- That would point down to the environment.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- A Point of Order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify that the Honourable Attorney-General is mistaken. I was not referring to whatever it was he was referring to.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Honourable Speaker, it is not what I was talking to.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- It is not what I was referring to, Mr. Speaker, and I just wanted to clarify that that the Honourable Attorney-General is mistaken. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

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

(Honourable Members interject)

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... it simply demonstrates that if we are genuinely concerned about climate change environment, we must come to Parliament with clean hands.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in Bonn in May, we suffered a significant setback when the nations of the world, under pressure from certain fossil fuel producers, set aside the IPCC Scientific Report endorsing the call for global warming to be kept at 1.5 degrees Celsius, above that of the pre-industrial age.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, you will recall that the 1.5 degrees target has been central to the efforts of Fiji and other Pacific Island nations to achieve a greater response to the climate threat. It was first enshrined in the landmark Suva declaration of the PIDF four years ago before going truly global, embraced by countries around the world.

Well, now that 1.5 degrees Celsius is off the table altogether at the UNFCCC level at the global climate negotiations. It is a blow to our hopes for more emission that Fiji regards as grossly irresponsible and indeed selfish. Mr. Speaker, Sir, as the impacts of climate change accelerate and attempts are made to weaken global ambition, we must listen more than ever to the scientists, not the climate deniers or those motivated by self-interest or political interest.

So we will be renewing and reinvigorating our campaign for 1.5 degrees Celsius to be reinstated as the benchmark ambition. We will be marshalling those with shared concerns and asking the Chilean Presidency to do everything possible to put 1.5 degrees Celsius back on the agenda at COP25. Mr. Speaker, Sir, at home, our Climate Change Act will be a legal umbrella to make sure that we deliver climate action and ambition in Fiji to lead by example rather than merely look to others to solve the problem.

Let me highlight some of the key features, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The Act will implement Fiji's commitment and obligations under the Paris Agreement and our enhanced NDC. It will establish the comprehensive framework for Fiji to achieve these long term emissions reduction target of net zero by 2050, by establishing a system for the measurement, reporting and verification of greenhouse gas emissions. It will set up a national greenhouse gas inventory and outline pathways for mitigating our emissions. It will legally support key policy documents already issued, including a National Climate Change Policy, Law Emissions Development Strategy, National Adaptation Plan and the National Plan Relocation Guidelines. It will provide the framework for adaptation and resilience development, including conducting an audit of existing infrastructure.

Decision-makers will be required to ensure that the new infrastructure has undergone a climate risk and resilience assessment. The Act will require government, public and private actors and other entities to consider climate change risks in making decisions. It will require Environmental Impact Assessments when we build new infrastructure so that, where possible, losses from events like *Cyclone Winston* can be reduced and where we rebuild, we will build back better - a programme that we have already started.

The Act will reward Fijians who develop projects that assist the climate effort and reduce emissions with Fijian carbon credits that can potentially be sold in Fiji or traded internationally. This

includes those who provide cleaner transport or protect forests and mangroves, and who will benefit from mechanisms in the Act that support this.

It will establish principles and procedures for the relocation of communities that are at risk from the adverse effects of climate change and support the relocation trust fund that has already been approved by Parliament. We will be doing an international launch through the Honourable Prime Minister of this Trust Fund at the UNSG Climate Summit next month. The new Act, Mr. Speaker, Sir, will recognise the need for a healthy ocean to deliver healthy climate and establish that the two cannot be separated in an ocean-based nation such as Fiji and indeed for the globe.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we want to help businesses and our communities manage and adapt to the impacts of climate change. As the first and one of the few governments in the world to combine our Ministry of Economy and the then Department of Climate Change, we understand the intrinsic relationship between a strong economy and a stable climate agenda.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we want to assure Honourable Members that the Government will engage with all stakeholders in the spirit of cooperation and goodwill. Because underpinning the new Act, Mr. Speaker, is the principle the Honourable Prime Minister has always enunciated both domestically and locally, that all of us are in the same *drua* - the same canoe, when it comes to climate change. We are, in fact, hoping that as many Fijians as possible take advantage of the opportunities the Act will create to undertake projects that reduce emissions and in doing so, earn carbon credits provided for under the legislation.

Mr. Speaker Sir, we hope that our development partners will recognise the importance of this Act and assist us with its implementation, noting that countries like Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom all have deep expertise in this area that we have drawn on in designing our own law. We also need to constantly find innovative and affordable financial products that will assist us to provide sustainable funds to meet our climate and development-related objectives. Indeed we say they have a say.

We need to be able to leverage off, not just our bilateral and multilateral partners but also involve the private sector. We look to our development partners to assist us with implementing specific provisions that qualify for access to the increasing pool of funding available for climate vulnerable nations and for improving the state of our oceans.

Our Green Bond Launch at the London Stock Exchange by the Honourable Prime Minister last year made history as the first to be issued by an emerging economy. We have plans to bring additional climate finance into Fiji and you will be hearing more about our efforts to attract these investments in the coming months. We must in this respect also ensure that the cost of bonds are attractive and sustainable. We look forward to working with our development partners to assist in crowding in private funds in the climate bond market at attractive and sustainable rates.

In respect of that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are starting work on the design of a new blue bond to attract climate finance to support the restoration, rehabilitation and preservation of mangroves and seagrasses in Fiji and other Pacific countries. As a pilot project under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, this blue bond would generate mitigation and adaptation outcomes for investors but at the same time building sustainable fisheries and assisting local communities (your local fishermen, et cetera), in meeting compliance and safety requirements and indeed cost.

We are exploring with the Green Climate Fund opportunities to secure early results based payments for protecting our forests under the GCS REDD+ Scheme. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are leading with the Marshall Islands, the Pacific Blue Shipping Partnership, that is working on a blended and

innovated finance structure to support the de-carbonisation of domestic marine transportation fleets and facilities in Fiji and across the Region. This means replacing inter-island ships with more efficient hybrid ships, thereby reducing fuel costs and emissions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we have already signalled, a key focus of our Climate Change Act is recognising the need for a healthy ocean to deliver a healthy climate. As the Honourable Members would know, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we made reference in the Budget to the Government's plan to strengthen the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) around Fiji. We are pleased to announce the development of the National Oceans Policy, under which Fiji plans to move to a 100 percent sustainably managed EEZ with 30 percent of this being earmarked as a marine-protected area by no later than 2030.

Fiji will be asking other Pacific nations to join us in this ambition venture at next week's Pacific Islands Forum and at the UN Secretary General's Summit that will be held next month. Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji is also asking other Pacific nations at the Pacific Islands Forum Meeting next week in the Leaders Meeting, to join us in imposing a 10-year moratorium on seabed mining from 2020 to 2030.

Some Pacific island countries have actually given out licences for this already. This should allow for a decade of proper scientific research of our economic zones and territorial waters. In addition, Fiji and other Pacific countries are seeking funding to develop a world-class Marine Research Centre and Marine Education Programmes at the Fiji National University and the University of the South Pacific.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in conclusion, we ask all Honourable Members to support these initiatives which we have outlined. All of which are part of a considered and holistic response by the Government to the increasing challenges we face from climate change and the pressures of development on land and at sea. We have an absolute and whole of Government commitment to the 2030 Global Sustainable Development Agenda.

It is the cornerstone of our national policies as we have the SDGs incorporated into our five and 20-year NDPs with specific targets, and policies are aligned with the long term transformation of our nation and its economy, Mr. Speaker, Sir. We also express Government's appreciation to those of our development partners who are assisting us with this national effort and ask them to do what they can to provide continuous support and assistance for the various initiatives that we have outlined today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I thank the Honourable Attorney-General for his Ministerial Statement. I give the floor to the Leader of the Opposition's designated speaker, the Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I think it is sad that that side of the House, Honourable Attorney-General and the Honourable Minister for Environment, should come to this House and talk about the environment, climate change and legislation, while at the same time flying balloons - balloons filled with helium. That is a big contradiction and it is a disgrace to the Honourable Prime Minister.

Remember, our Prime Minister is the COP23 President, and yet you are flying balloons filled with helium. It does not matter what it does when it goes up there, but it is filled with helium. That is a sign of the commitment from that side to our environment. Shame on you! Shame on you, it is a disgrace! The Honourable Prime Minister is the President of COP23, and you are doing this.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- It maybe the wrong balloon.

HON. RATU N. LALABALAVU.- No respect at all.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, it is filled with helium.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Do not be like a cartoon

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You are a cartoon - flying balloons.

(Laughter)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is a measure of how much commitment we have to the environment or to climate change and it is very clear from this side. It is talk, talk, talk - no action! You are just doing too much talk in this madhouse. You should come here with results and that is the point.

On the need for legislation, yes, we welcome that, but at the same time, we must be very clear on the purpose and intention. Climate change is about two basic things: our commitment to reduction of carbon and, secondly, measures to address climate change. We already have legislation, so we ask ourselves - What are our commitments? We were already committed but we were doing nothing.

We have the Ozone Depletion Act, that was already there. We also have the Environmental Management Act; laws are just books of rules. What matters is how you put them into effect and what better example than the inefficiency of the Environmental Management Act and you can just look at it. The Department of Environment was just a Department; not even a Ministry, it is still not a Ministry and yet the Honourable Minister was here reading out all these figures but we look at you, you need capacity, you need people ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- You need environmental officers, where are they? All those officers who are putting all those notices, what does it mean?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Another Lion King here.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- He is not a Lion King. Where is your National Environmental Council? What is it doing? Has it sat?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Yes, come and talk to us.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Resource Management Unit, where is the Management Unit? In here, you come and talk, talk, talk, talk, give us the results.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- We look to you and we only see a very small environmental office, how many people are there - less than 10 and the commitment is huge. We should have expected more - you need capacity, you need empowerment.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And you do not have it.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- And that is coming from that side.

HON. MEMBER.- Lion King.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is the same with this climate change legislation. The Honourable Attorney-General said it is only six months - six months, and for any law, we all agree we need consultation, consultation, consultation. So we have been forced into this because we do not have any serious commitment locally, yet we want to be champions in the globe, why because you want to go there and get some money. You do not have any money and that is why you are rushing in. You do not even have an environmental policy, you do not have any climate change policy, we forced ourselves to that and now we are forcing ourselves into this legislation. We do not have any real commitment, it is just words, words, words into this madhouse.

We need actual commitment, you need capacity, you need to consult; those are not here. So we just come and talk here and we go and talk in Paris, talk in New York and the whole world thinks we are doing something but we are doing nothing. Just look at Freesouls. The Honourable Prime Minister was forced to give a statement here because nothing was happening here. May I ask: what has happened to the rogue policeman? We are still waiting, they have been swept under the carpet; nothing happening.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member for the statement. I now give the floor to the Leader of the National Federation Party, you have the floor, Honourable Professor Biman Prasad.

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

I was also a bit curious why this Ministerial Statement talked about the Bill. I thought it might have been appropriate if the Honourable Minister actually presented the Bill in this Parliament because I think what he said was that the Bill would be approved in the September sitting but I ...

HON. A.SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Not approved, tabled.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Tabled, all right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

I am happy with the assurance from the Honourable Minister that the Bill will have an extensive and holistic consultation before it is passed because I think it is going to be an important law and one that I think will allow Fiji to meet its commitment internationally. I know, Mr. Speaker, that various Governments around the world are framing their climate change issues and some of them are framing them as an emergency or from a human security point of view.

I know that Fiji intends to secure \$16 million from the global environment facility but I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I hope that there would be serious and impactful connections have been made between this proposed law and those funds if Fiji is successful in its bid.

I know that the Government has a number of plans such as the NDC, implementation roadmap, the five to 20-year plan, the National Adaptation Plan, Climate Vulnerability Assessment and the National Climate Change Policy.

Mr. Speaker, now that we have the Ministry of Environment and we have the Ministry of Climate Change, perhaps with these proposed laws being brought in, the Government should consider putting environment, climate change and all the activities under one ministry to better coordinate the different activities. I notice that there are so many plans and there will be so many things happening at one time and I think what we need is better connectivity.

Mr. Speaker, we have had periods of history around the world where we have fashionable terms. We have Millennium Development Goals (MDG), now we have Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), now climate change is on the agenda but sometimes I think that possessively overwhelming preoccupation with a particular focus may neglect other important areas, for example, there are everyday issues like salt water intrusion through coastal flooding, ocean acidification where our coral reefs, which is a major economic resource for tourism, is under threat. So, unless we bring in these together in a coordinated manner and ensure that the funding that we are going to get by adopting this very important and innovative laws, we should not be left in a situation where certain areas are neglected.

If I may just add, Mr. Speaker, as I said these laws are very important but sometimes, countries adopt laws and the laws just become a begging bowl for funds and then if it is not coordinated properly and used properly then the whole intention of the objective of adopting a particular law may not be achieved. So, that is where I am going to end, Mr. Speaker, on that cautionary note, thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Leader of the National Federation Party for his contribution to this Ministerial Statement.

Honourable Members, we will continue. I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil, Service and Communications, the Honourable Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

CIVIL AVIATION REFORM (AMENDMENT) BILL 2019

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the -

- a) Civil Aviation Reform (Amendment) Bill 2019 (Bill No. 25/2019), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- a) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- b) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament;
- c) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 8th August, 2019; and
- d) one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to speak to his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reason why this Bill is being tabled is because next month we have the audits being carried out by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) of the Civil Aviation Authority

of Fiji. There are two provisions in the actual relevant Act that need to be amended to get the Act to meet up with the ICAO standards and so the CAAF has requested us to have these amendments carried out by Parliament so we can be in compliance with the international changes that have taken place.

One of them, of course, you will see is that the regulation of drones and the licensing and this is why this Bill is being tabled for us to be able to discuss this. Once the Bill gets circulated which I understand has been circulated, Honourable Members will see there are only some minor amendments to it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this motion.

Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- As a matter of principle, we are opposing this motion. We do not even have a copy of the Bill. I do not have it in my hand, I need notice. We need notice for any law substantive as this before we can talk on it.

The Standing Orders allow motions to come without notice. But as a matter of principle, Honourable Speaker, this is a sign of neglect by the people concerned; Civil Aviation. They want us to comply to some international standards and for that, we had to suffer. We had to come here and debate on a Bill without knowledge of the details of what it is, and this will also deny the Court.

The lawmaking process is like this; you go out, you consult, you hear their views, then you take it to Cabinet. Cabinet brings it here, then it goes to a Standing Committee and we consult again. It is inclusive, and this is denying all that, and we are calling ourselves a democracy? We are not democracy doing this, so we oppose it.

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there any other Member who wishes to take the floor? Honourable Attorney General.

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as highlighted, the amendment is for CAAF to be compliant with the legal requirements, of course, in respect of the other requirements which are the standards, so they actually have to go and carry out the physical inspection, et cetera. It has got nothing to do with that, it is to do with the legal compliance with it.

Again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member should note that the subject matter is not very difficult, nor is it intellectually demanding. The reality of the matter is that, they have from now till tomorrow, to be able to look at the provisions and to be able to contribute to it and, Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, the key stakeholder is the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji, and I can assure the Honourable Member, it is actually quite easy if he puts his mind to it.

With that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we move that this motion be approved and that we discuss this Bill tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

The Question is:

Pursuant to Standing Orders 51:

That the –

- a) Civil Aviation Reform (Amendment) Bill 2019 (Bill No. 25/2019), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament;
- d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 8th August, 2019; and
- e) one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to the Honourable Attorney-General as the Member moving this motion.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of ‘Ayes’ and ‘Nays’)

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

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	26
Noes	:	22
Not Voted	:	3

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, there being 26 Ayes, 22 Nays and 3 Not Voted, the motion is, therefore, agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Honourable Members, I just want to remind Honourable Members regarding Standing Order 51. Standing Order 51 does not require notice. You receive the Bill when the Honourable Attorney-General moves the Standing Order 51, so it does not require notice.

Honourable Members, I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

MARITIME TRANSPORT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2019

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the –

- a) Maritime Transport (Amendment) Bill 2019 (Bill No. 26/2019), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament;
- d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 8th August, 2019; and
- e) one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General to

speak to his motion.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Bill is a one-liner Bill. Of course, clause 1 is about the actual amendment.

Clause 2 is the actual amendment that says, and I quote from the Bill:

Section 111 of the Maritime Transport Act 2013 is amended by deleting “one year” and substituting with “20 years”.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this relates to the announcement made in the Budget that in order for us to encourage better shipping services and, indeed, better quality of ships in the maritime areas, that we need to get more private sector participation. As you know, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Parliament approved the removal of VAT payable on ships, that the zero-rating of duty is being carried out on ships, Parliament has also approved or as announced in the Budget, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that Government will actually contribute \$20,000 towards hybrid ships, electric ships.

So as announced, the Honourable Minister for Transport should have the ability to be able to give longer term contracts because at the moment, as the law stands and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, who unfortunately is not here, yesterday he had asked the question in the evening: what are other things that we can do to encourage private sector investment and what are the things that we can do to streamline businesses? This is precisely one of those things that we must do.

As I highlighted the example that I gave, unfortunately, most of the Honourable Members of the Opposition were not here, is that there is certain regulatory requirements at LTA that are quite bureaucratic, that are holding back private sector investment.

At the moment, the Honourable Minister for Transport, when his Ministry signs a contract with the private sector ship, supplier of services, even if he gives him or the company a 10-year or 15-year contract, it is meaningless because the coastal trading licence which he gives is only given for one year. So, the private sector person cannot take his 10-year or 15-year contract and go to the bank and say, “Look, I have been given this lucrative contract, I can now supply shipping services. By the way, I want to buy a new vessel or a good secondhand vessel and I want to invest.”

The banks will say, “Go away”, because your coastal trading licence is only for one year. They can take your coastal trading licence away. So, in this way, we are marrying up the ability of the Minister for Transport to issue a 15-year to 20-year contract to the shipping provider, and also to be able to issue a coastal trading licence.

What this means, Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, the ship operator needs to comply with all the requirements under the Act about the ship being seaworthy, et cetera. So, this is simply what this amendment seeks to do, which is to give the Minister the ability to give a coastal trading licence for up to 20 years. But, of course, it is at his discretion - he can give it for 15 years, 17 years, 20 years and even 10 years. That is his choice, depending on the shipping company he wishes to engage or contract with.

So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this amendment, for anyone who has been interested in providing, and we hear Honourable Members of the Opposition always talking about maritime services that need to improve and, of course, we recognise and we have said that always.

In fact, the Honourable Minister for Transport has also announced in the Budget and budgetary funds have been allocated, that he is going to go around and hold public consultations in respect of passenger rights. For example, at the moment, if you live somewhere in the interior of Cakaudrove and

you come down to Savusavu to catch the ferry or the boat, and if the boat owner says, “You get there, the ferry is supposed to leave at 6.00 p.m.,” as you reach there, he says, “Sorry, we’re not going for the next 12 hours or 15 hours,” the passenger has got no rights. They do not give them a meal voucher, they do not give them accommodation or whatever the case is.

So we obviously need to build around that. We obviously also need to build a regulated schedule for shipping companies because more ship operators want to come in, the bigger boys are actually pushing them out, they actually moor much longer, so the others have to wait out in the sea, et cetera.

So we are doing that work. This will, of course, assist and crowd in more private sector investment. So this is the purpose of this and we urge all the Honourable Members to support this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General.

Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this motion. Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Honourable Speaker, again, we are opposing this Bill. Having said that, we (this side of the House) understand very well that Order 51 motions do not require notice.

At the same time, the Government must be responsible in putting before the House only those motions or legislations that are deserving, Consequential Bills, for example. They are an exception, and not a rule.

Issuance of coastline licence for mining for a period of 20 years, there are a lot of consequences that relate to that. Have they consulted? There is a need to consult the people who are affected by this - the public, and that is the reason why we require time to do the lawmaking process that I have stated which must be inclusive. It is not only us, it is not only you, there are people that are affected by this. That is why we are opposing this.

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

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I rise to oppose this Bill. I note from the years passed, especially since this was a Decree in 2013 brought by this Government, that in the past years they had actually amended section 111 to reduce the time from five years (they had the coastal trading licences for five years) to one year and then now we are looking at increasing from one year to 20 years.

The reasons being given by the Attorney-General, I mean, certainly there needs to be consultation with business owners, those who operate these ships and those that are affected by it too. What kind of considerations are you giving to issue a 20-year licence? I mean, that is a long time to have a licence.

Do we see the dangers of possible monopolies by certain companies if they are given 20-year licences and it does not make room for other operators if they are providing these services? So the FCCC should have a look at this, they should be consulted, and the Consumer Council. If you are looking at monopolies of companies and shipping companies, then it will affect the prices and what is charged to our customers. So what does that mean for us? Again, the need for consultation.

The Honourable Attorney-General has spoken about trying to get a loan or trying to get some sort of help with their business but if they have a one-year licence, then it is tough for them, if they want something for 20 years, he mentioned. Well, I liken that to the issue about our workers. Our civil servants

who are on a three-year contract cannot secure loans for longer than three years. They find it difficult to get loans and that banks will not give them the loans for longer periods of times, so similar concept. So I ask the Honourable Attorney-General, he is applying that concept there for business, why not think about our workers and what they need in terms of security and in terms of perpetuity. So, again, the consultation needed for this kind of changes in this term that has been given.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member.

The Honourable Minister Usamate, you have the floor.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would just like to support the Bill.

I think the motion here is about whether to take it through Standing Order 51 or not. We will eventually debate the merits of this when we get to that debate tomorrow.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister when he was talking, he was giving the justification for why we need to take this through Section 51.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- This is basically the policy announcements that were made during the budget and this amendment will allow us to implement what we had discussed during the budget.

There has been a lot of talk already in Parliament about the need to have better ships especially for the maritime region. We know right now that the current shipping franchise contracts that had been awarded will finish around September. So one of the things that we want to do is to make sure that when we award the new franchise contracts in September that they give the opportunity for those that are vying for these contracts to have the surety of a 20-year opportunity getting contracts for 20 years which will encourage them to bring better ships.

All of us in this House have been talking about that. So if we are saying we are opposing this idea of moving this through section 51, what we are basically saying to the people in the maritime areas that we do not want you have good ships.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- No.

HON. J. USAMATE.- That is what you are basically saying. You are saying that you do not want the people in the maritime islands to travel on good ships. You want them to still travel on the old dilapidated ships, that is a concern, so this is a way forward.

This is action that the Honourable Nawaikula is talking about; this is not just talk, this is action. This is the action that the Honourable Tabuya wanted to talk about, this is action. This is a Government that takes action that changes people's lives.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Viliame Gavoka. You have the floor.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. The way these things are coming into Parliament is sickening.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- This Parliament cannot be proud of the fact that the majority of the laws it makes come through Standing Order 51, you cannot be proud of that.

It is dereliction of duty on the part of FijiFirst and the abuse of process, if I remember correctly, the previous Speaker, is one who is always gung-ho about processes. And here he is saying, "Accept this", will abuse the process but accept it.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, this has to stop. We have suggested to FijiFirst to follow the example of SDL, when we had a Legislated Committee. A Legislated Committee, Honourable Speaker, made sure they brought two Bills to the House in every sitting, you remember that Honourable Speaker, you were Speaker then.

They have not even considered that. We end up with this everyday in the way we deliberate in this House - Standing Order 51. It is sickening, Honourable Speaker, and I hope it stops. These are complex issues. Honourable Speaker, ICAO is not a trifle matter, it is not something you can do in one day. The ICAO is a huge organisation and it needs a lot of attention to what they say; a lot of dialogue, not talk this way, Honourable Speaker.

You cannot go to international forum and say that we have a Parliament in Fiji and have IPU and all that when we know that a vast majority of what we do, is abuse of process that comes through the emergency pathway. Honourable Speaker, this must stop and that is why we are opposing this Bill, Honourable Speaker. Thank you.

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I just wanted to make a short contribution in support of this Bill.

The Opposition is basically playing on emotions. This is a very simple subject before us Honourable Speaker, Sir. Looking across the floor, I could see Honourable Jale, Honourable Radrodoro and Honourable Qereqeretabua, they have been asking for better shipping services. The way to get better shipping services is to give a security of tenure, to basically increase the amount of time that is allowed for them to hold a coastal trading licence that does not take into consideration the survey requirement that they have to go through annually. Irrespective of that, she is saying that there was a five-year coastal trading licence. There has never been a five-year coastal trading licence.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Coastal trading licence is specifically for one year. I do not understand if they want something to improve the shipping services to the islands, they will support this because this is basically the fundamental issue of having enough finance to buy better ships ...

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- ... to service the islands and provide better services for our maritime passengers. It is very simple. If they take away the equation of emotions, they should support this Bill.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau, you have the floor.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. At the outset, I would like to ask, are we in a Parliament or are we in a dictatorship? Is this a Parliament or is this a dictatorship? If it is a Parliament

(Honourable Government Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- If this is a Parliament then, what is the Parliament for? It is for consultation. Why? Because you are the representative of your voters and we are the representative of the voters, so we need to consult on this. The other issue is, people are saying that some people are getting emotional. No, we are not getting emotional, no one is getting emotional.

(Honourable Government Members interject)

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- The rationale for our opposing it has been explained and it is not a simple increase to 20 years. When you talk about 20 years, it is quite a complex issue because when you move it to 20 years, I just had a quick look through the Australian Coastal Trading Licences. A lot of them are just five years. There is none for 20 years unless you know about it.

So, what I am saying, it needs proper consultation, proper study on the rationale on why it should move to 20 years because there is a lot of complications over 20 years. For example, if we move it to a 20-year licence, is there someone who is waiting for the 20-year licence which prompted this?

The other issues about loans and finances, is the viability of a company dependent on us passing an Act of Parliament? No, businesses applying for franchises should be viable businesses and having their own business plan, et cetera. It should not depend on this 20-year licence. That is just one of the many issues which I am trying to raise here and there needs to be compatibility as I mentioned in terms of the length of the licence. I know there might be annual checks by MSAF but these are complications and its obviously anti-competition. When we are tendering franchises and you are granting 20-year licence, where is the opportunity for those who might want to come in after of one to five years?

(Honourable Government Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- You are saying that you will be granting a 20-year licence within that, what is the opportunity for others? So, those are just some of the issues I would like to raise today, Honourable Speaker, Sir, which is why it is very critical that this Bill be looked at by the Parliamentary Select Committees. We need the input of experts in the shipping industry, all stakeholders, all businesses who are vying for the franchise, past and present and even the current. Not only that, but also our population in the maritime provinces. They need to put in their input because it has a lot of implications. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, those are my contributions to the proposed Bill. *Vinaka*.

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you very much, Honourable Speaker. I would like to also contribute to the motion. Certainly, Honourable Speaker, Sir, we are talking about this going through Standing Order 51 but really there has been some discussions about shipping, so I thought, it is important for us to realise that shipping into the maritime service and the maritime areas is difficult.

There are challenges and this Government is doing all that it can to be able stimulate and also ensure that we will be able to continue to support this important venture. This is something that has been raised by the Opposition and this is one of the avenues that we see will be able to support this. It is the opportunity to be able to give security of tenure for those who are providing the service.

Of course, there will be contractual obligations that will happen to ensure that the lives of Fijians are protected. But the simple measures being discussed today is taking it into Standing Order 51 and then for tomorrow's discussion is the fact that this Government actually wants to ensure that we have a better shipping service for our maritime areas which has so many complex challenges. As a child, I remember going down to the wharf and seeing our relatives going back to the islands.

Over the years, we have seen different kinds of shipping companies come. One of the reasons is because of the many challenges that are there. It is hoped that by doing this, we will be able to have consistency in better types of ship and the service that we provide to the maritime islands. That is my small contribution, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we are not debating the contents of this Bill now, we are debating the process by which the Honourable Attorney-General has moved this motion. The debate on the Bill comes tomorrow. So I just want to remind because we are going hither, thither and yon. I hope I have made myself clear regarding that.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General for his right of reply.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to respond to the issues raised by the Members of the Opposition in respect of the merits of the Bill. I would like to just talk about the motion that we should discuss this Bill tomorrow, that one hour has been given and the Members, of course, have the opportunity to study it all; that one line, they can study it all from tonight till tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General. Honourable Members, Parliament will now vote. The question is, pursuant to Standing Order 51 that:

- a) The Maritime Transport (Amendment) Bill 2019 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- b) The Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- c) The the Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament;
- d) The Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 8th August, 2019; but
- e) one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to the Honourable Attorney-General as the Member moving this motion.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Ayes' and 'Nays')

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

Votes cast:

Ayes : 26
Noes : 22
Not Voted : 3

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the results of the vote: there being 26 Ayes, 22 Noes and 3 Not Voted, the motion is therefore agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

Honourable Members, we will move on. I call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2019

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the –

- a) Telecommunications (Amendment) Bill 2019 (Bill No. 27/2019), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament;
- d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 8th August, 2019; and
- e) one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call on the Honourable Attorney-General to speak to his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Bill seeks to amend the existing Telecommunication's Act essentially to bring in to the Telecommunication Development Trust Fund the 10-cent levy on data usage.

This Trust Fund, Mr. Speaker, Sir, has been in existence for quite some time where we have been, for the past number of years, levying on inter-connection services on voice usage, and we have collected substantial amounts of money from that. The monies have been used to initially start up the work with *Walesi*, the monies were then used, Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the setting up of the tele-centres around Fiji.

We are in access of 20 tele-centres that have been set up, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in schools and community halls where we provide free internet connectivity, free webcams, free computers and indeed in some schools, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we even provide for after-hours security guard on the condition that not only school students actually use the computers but also the community members living in an area who actually have access to the internet services which are provided free of charge through this Trust Fund that we have had.

However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have seen that the Trust Fund collection rate has deteriorated significantly. The reason why, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that most people now do not make voice calls. Most people now have *Facebook* chats or people use *Viber* or other applications through which they make

voice calls on which they depend on the data. So just to give you an example, Mr. Speaker, Sir, initially a few years ago, we collected approximately \$5 million in 2017; in 2018, it went to \$4 million; in January to March this year, we only collected \$394,000, you will see the deterioration because as we know, most people now do not make voice calls, they simply web chat or *Facebook* chats, *Messenger* and they also do *Viber* calls.

We have had discussions, of course, Mr. Speaker, Sir, so therefore in order to keep on replenishing that, we are proposing to put a 10-cent levy on the data usage. Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, this is not going to break the bank for anyone.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you know, as highlighted in Parliament that with the Fiji Competition and Consumer Commission's (FCCC) intervention, the cost for ISP providers has significantly dropped from \$240,000 to now \$40,000. In other words, it has been about 600-percent decrease in cost, for example, companies like Digicel, Vodafone that used to access the Southern Cross cable, that is only provided by FINTEL. So, obviously with the reduction in cost, the 10-cent levy is not going to make a difference to them and the ability to provide the cost or the services but it will also help build the kitty.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Sir, with *Walesi* now being rolled out throughout Fiji, we get requests almost on a daily basis by various isolated villages and various other communities that live in isolated areas where they want us to come and set up *Walesi* in their community halls which we actually do, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

As some of you do know that, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's village is a beneficiary of that, the Honourable Prime Minister was there, I think, a year before that. The Honourable Member (the President) again is saying something but, of course, they need to set up towers all over the place and that costs money.

But this levy for the Trust Fund, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is essentially to provide community outreach connectivity and that is what it does and this is why the amendment has been brought about because we need to replenish the funds and carry out this very important community work that will empower ordinary Fijians, in particular those who are on the margins of society. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. Any Honourable Member wishing to take the floor? Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have no further comments. Thank you.

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

Question put.

The Question is, Pursuant to Standing Orders 51 that:

- (a) The Telecommunications (Amendment) Bill 2019 (Bill No. 27/2019), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) The Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) The Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament;
- (d) The Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 8th August, 2019; but

- (e) one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to the Honourable Attorney-General as the Member moving this motion.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Ayes' and 'Nays')

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

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	26
Nays	:	22
Not voted	:	3

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, there being 26 Ayes, 22 Nays and 3 Not Voted, the motion is, therefore, agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

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

EXCISE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 2019

Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Orders 51, I move:

- (a) That the Excise (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2019 (Bill No. 28/2019), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) That the Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) That the Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) That the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 8th August, 2019, but that one hour be given to debate the Bill with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call upon the Honourable Attorney-General to speak to his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as the Honourable Members would know from the Bill that has been circulated (by the way, we had given all these Bills to Parliament at 9.00 a.m. this morning), it has only one amendment, there are two clauses; one is the actual amendment itself; and the other one is the substantive amendment, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and this is to correct an anomaly that unfortunately the FRCS had not implemented properly, which is to include sweetened beverages in Schedule 1 of the Act which is included in Schedule 2 of the Act but not in Schedule 1 of the Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General. Honourable Members, the floor is open for debate on the motion. Honourable Members, I give the floor to the Honourable Attorney-General.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have no further comments.

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

Question put.

The Question is, pursuant to Standing Orders 51:

- (a) That the Excise (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2019 (Bill No. 28/2019), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) That the Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) That the Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) That the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 8th August, 2019; but
- (e) That one hour be given to debate the Bill with the right of reply given to the Honourable Attorney-General as the Member moving the motion.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Ayes' and 'Nays')

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

Votes cast:

Ayes	:	26
Noes	:	22
Not voted	:	3

HON. SPEAKER.- The motion is therefore agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will now suspend proceedings for lunch which will be served in the Big Committee Room, and Parliament will resume proceedings at 2.30 p.m.

We adjourn for lunch.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.26 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.33 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I remind the Honourable Members that at the end of each debate, we will be voting merely to note the Reports.

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.

**REVIEW REPORT OF THE FIJI POLICE FORCE
(JANUARY - JULY) 2016 ANNUAL REPORT**

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That Parliament debates the Review Report of the Fiji Police Force (January to July) 2016 Annual Report, which was tabled on 12th July, 2018.

HON. DR. S.R. GOVIND.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now invite the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, to speak on the motion.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and Honourable Members of Parliament: On behalf of the Honourable Members of the Committee, I take this opportunity to move a motion in regards to the debate on the Committee Report tabled on the 12th of July, 2018 by the previous Chairperson, Lt. Col. (Ret'd) Netani Rika.

The purpose of the review was to scrutinise the Fiji Police Force (January to July) 2016 Bi-Annual Report specifically on the Department's Operations and Administration. The Fiji Police Force is undergoing reforms and restructure whilst continuing its core role of maintaining law and order, defending national security interests and maintaining Fiji's contribution to global peace.

Also in 2016, the strength of Fiji as a nation was tested with the worst Category 5 *TC Winston* to hit the Fiji Group. The resilience of the nation, its people, with helping friends from the region and the globe shone through with resilience in post-cyclone relief, recovery and return to normalcy.

The Fiji Police Force has made significant improvements in terms of meeting its key performance indicators in trying to reduce complaints and disciplinary offences against officers by 50 percent with a reduction by 2 percent. The crime rate decreased by 6 percent close to the target to reduce overall crime rate by 10 percent.

Similarly, the serious crimes decreased by 5 percent, close to the target to reduce serious crime by 10 percent. Crimes against children and women both decreased by 2 percent over the 10 percent reduction target for both. Also road fatalities decreased by 23 percent, close to the 30-percent reduction target. Our rate of detection was 61 percent closer to the 70 percent target.

Provisions of better resourcing through investments in the ICT, scientific, legal, cyber, forensics, drone and CCTV technology, Duavata Community Policing initiatives and policing through sports have been targeted approaches to reducing the overall crime rate. Human resources record is being consolidated into an internally-designated database. The police white paper consultation is in progress.

The Committee commends the good work of the organisation and achievements reported in its 2016 Annual Report. While applauding the achievements of the Police Department, the Committee has identified some opportunities for improvements. These are outlined in the Report.

I take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to thank the Commissioner of Police, including all staff and their families for their commitment and dedication to national service. There are three recommendations before this august House, and I will only focus on one - encouraging digitalisation of HR, Accounts and police records for safe and secure information database.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is anticipated that the recommendations by the Committee, as being actioned by Government and the relevant line Ministry and the Fiji Police Force, are addressed through appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with those few comments and as a Member, I support the recommendations of the Report before this august House. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this motion. Honourable Anare Jale, you have the floor.

HON. A. JALE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for allowing me to contribute to the debate on the Fiji Police Force (January to July) 2016 Bi-Annual Report. The Report is bipartisan signed by all Committee Members.

Sir, I had raised in this august House before my concern about the age of the Annual Reports being reported on by the respective Standing Committees. The delay in the submission of Annual Reports by Heads of Departments and Agencies, inhibits the timely scrutiny of the corporate plans, the key performance indicators for the Ministries and Departments by this House in relation to the budget allocated to them by Parliament.

I know that in the past, the submission of Annual Reports within six months from the end of financial year was part of the Permanent Secretary or Head of Department's contract of service on which with the other KPIs, performance is assessed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the period under report was an unusual one. Parts of Fiji were devastated by *TC Winston*. The Department of Police had to stand up for activities that were not in its workplan. Resources were redeployed to cater for security and humanitarian needs in affected areas.

New challenges faced the Police Department. New emerging crime trends, in particular, synthetic drugs came to the forefront and has been and is a serious problem facing the country now. I am aware there are strategies to confront this challenge, has been incorporated into the Government's National Development Plan (NDP).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Fiji Police Force Restructure Programme or Project was launched during the period and the progress on this initiative will feature in the later Annual Reports of the Department.

The mounting challenges facing the Department of Police requires consolidated effort by relevant stakeholders, in particular the community. On that, the police programme titled, Duavata Community Policing, is a commendable initiative.

The *Operation Tatarovi* for traffic enforcement and *Operation Cavouraka* for the fight against cultivation of green drugs is also noted and commended.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Cadet Scheme being pursued at secondary schools is part of the Duavata Community Policing, meant to groom our youth to be better citizens, law-abiding and potential leaders in the community. However, the increase in crimes committed by students and their involvement in drugs is a serious concern.

The Duavata Community Policing, apart from the Cadet Scheme, should also revive Boy Scouts and Girl Guides which had been proven successful in the past in preparing our students to be better and useful citizens.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support the motion before the House.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua, you have the floor.

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to all the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Review Report before the House covers the period from January to July 2016. It records a decrease in the crime rate of six percent and serious crime by five percent. There is also a reduction in road fatalities by 33 percent and a two percent decrease in violence against women and children.

The other key feature of the Report records the ongoing Fiji Police Force Restructure and Reform Programme, and there is also a brief mention about the Duavata Initiative on which I intend to speak on in this debate.

Allow me to begin by making reference to the review of fitness level of the police officers. This is a pressing issue to the Force and needs remedial actions. The RFL tests conducted by the Fiji Police Force is highly questionable, given the physique of some of the officers recently pictured in the media or social media, as well as those marching down the streets of our towns and cities. It is totally absurd for the Commissioner of Police to say he will step down if he failed the RFL test. He must remember it is not about him, it is about the entire Force.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, police transportation is an ongoing issue in almost every part of the country. This is highlighted in the Report, and the problem continues to pursue. In a small nation like ours immune from political violence or any threat to the lives of our leaders, one wonders as to what is the rationale behind the scaled up security, unless they themselves know what or whom they are afraid of. The vehicles that are at their disposal for their security must be diverted to the Fiji Police Force, to resolve the scarcity of transports faced by the Fiji Police Force.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, talking about the Fiji Police Force Restructure and Reform Programme, we note that the Mercer Report of 2003 is now implemented and hope that it will benefit the officers in the Force.

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Opposition would like to commend the officers of the Fiji Police Force, who are, on their own volition, on and off duty. It is a challenging and daunting task to rescue people, manage the evacuation process, maintain peace and order in evacuation centres, ensure all the access to the rural and remote areas are opened up in the shortest possible time and communities with basic services made to feel safe. That was no mean feat and I think all of us agree to thank and salute our police officers for a job well done.

Fifthly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, equipping our police posts and stations is another urgent issue that has come for its fair share of mention during the Committee stage as an ongoing issue. The nominal increase in the Police Budget last year has partially resolved the problem but in many rural and remote areas, they continue to rely on community assistance to function effectively. I hope this is taken up as one of the issues with regards to the ongoing Fiji Police Force Reform and Restructure Programme.

Regarding the Duavata Initiative, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think it would be prudent that we begin to think along borrowing the Singaporean example where community policing is funded by the Government and citizens have powers to arrest. Even at one time, seven out of every ten arrests made in Singapore was by its citizens. So much of productive citizenry and patriotism.

That being so, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would humbly request the Honourable Minister for Defence and the Commissioner of Police to revisit the recommendations made by the late Mr. Fred Caine in 2013 with regards to the amendments he suggested to be made to the Police Act for Community Policing to enjoy a degree of legal and statutory basis.

I think every Honourable Member, Sir, would agree that not everything is perfect or could be perfect about our Police Force. But there are some basic things which need to be corrected all the time and let me not hesitate to mention a few:

- Saving lives and property;
- Upholding and enforcing the rule of law;
- Encouraging productive citizenry;
- Respecting individual and group rights; and
- Being independent and have political neutrality.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while we are proud of our Police Force for its service to the nation and the peacekeeping duties overseas, that success story since 2006 has been eclipsed by the culture of torture. The injury and death of civilians in Police custody and the targeted harassment of the political opponent of this dictatorship has defaced the image and repute of our Police Force in the eyes of our citizens.

That brings me to suggest that there is a dire need to involve our Police in community peace-building and reconciliation process, so as to enable the Police to restore the faith and confidence of the people as agents of peace and order, than to be perceived as force of terror.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, just before I finish off, allow me to redraw the attention of this House to the proposed Police Academy that was supposed to be constructed at Nabukavesi, Namosi. Can we be advised whether there is an intention to pursue the project further or not?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, while there may be some cause of satisfaction arising from the contents of the Report from 2016, the escalation of crime rate in the recent past, compounded by substance abuse, crimes against morality and violence against women and children, now arises the state of our Police.

Let us make it a collective effort to make our society safe and secure as we seek peace, progress and prosperity. Honourable Speaker, Sir, I support the motion before the House.

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

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, a couple of brief comments on the motion by the Honourable Alexander O'Connor.

Honourable Speaker, growing our domestic industries, achieving the macro-economic objectives and transforming Fiji are part of this Government's concerted efforts to establish Fiji as the hub of economic activity in the region. Central to this, of course, is our capacity to provide a safe and secure environment for growth.

An important part of realising this objective is ensuring that the rule of law is upheld and that our families and communities are safe. The Fiji Police Force will continue to be empowered through capacity-building opportunities so it can carry out their responsibility effectively.

The Fiji Police Force takes its responsibility seriously and through Government, has made specific investments in science, forensic, cyber-policing, surveillance and legal expertise in order to address such cases.

The Fiji Police Force needs our concerted effort and support, as the security of our nation is paramount and also each and everyone's responsibility. I, therefore, support the Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister. The Honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I also wish to provide my response to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee Report in relation to the Review of the Fiji Police Force (January – July) 2016 Annual Report, and again I wish to also commend the Committee for this Report.

I will go straight into the three recommendations, Mr. Speaker Sir. I note that the Committee had three recommendations each of which I will respond to as follows:

Recommendation 1: Encourage digitalisation of HR, Accounts and police records for safe and secure information database.

Mr. Speaker Sir, in response I wish to say that the Fiji Police Force is currently engaged with the Government ICT services for the roll out of the consolidated human resources information system and it is currently developing its database to facilitate this recommendation.

Recommendation 2: Shifting gear towards focused leadership, management and supervision training in the senior, middle and operational levels of the organisation.

Again, Mr. Speaker Sir, in response, the Fiji Police Force remains committed to providing all Fijians and indeed all people in Fiji with timely and efficient services in line with international and internal best practices. Since 2016, the Fiji Police Force has sent various officers overseas for training and development.

If I mention a few, Mr. Speaker, Sir, police officers have been sent to institutions such as

- The FBI Academy in Washington, United States of America;
- I have also been briefed lately by the Commissioner of Police that the allocation for this year, I think for the first time ever, we will be sending one of the senior female police officers to the Academy, one of the investigators in the Police Force;

- We have the Pacific Forum Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) in Hawaii;
- The George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Germany;
- Attend Command Courses in Malaysia and Indonesia;
- Attend Scoping and Comparative Study to China, Hong Kong, Singapore; and the
- Fiji Police Force officers have also been sent to the Technical Staff Training and Development Courses in India, Australia, New Zealand, INTERPOL Singapore, Japan and South Korea;
- Just last week, I have also delivered a letter from the Australian Government to the Commissioner of Police in which the Police Force has been offered one place for next year's classes at the New Zealand Defence Command and Staff College; that will be the first for the Fiji Police.
- The RFMF will retain their two places and through the bilaterals that we have with the Heads of Securities when they visited Fiji early this year, we asked for an additional space at the New Zealand Command and Staff College.
- The Fiji Police Force, I am happy to report, Mr. Speaker, will have a place in Canberra, Australia next year.

Furthermore, in the past year, I also wish to mention, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that 205 police officers have participated in overseas leadership and specialised trainings, conferences, symposiums and working group meetings.

In addition, a total of 1,341 police officers at middle and operational levels have participated in local training programmes, covering 33 targeted courses.

Recommendation 3: Constant focus on continuous improvement on work ethics and leadership integrity.

The first one, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is the Fiji Police Force has adopted a monitoring and evaluation framework whereby audit verifications are conducted on a quarterly basis to ensure that all the departments of the Fiji Police Force are operating in accordance to set targets, standards, procedures and challenges as identified to address them.

We take note of the comments to help us in our pursuit for excellence in service delivery in the Fiji Police Force.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support the motion before the House. Thank you.

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

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I rise to make my contribution to the motion before the House on the Police Report for the period (January-July) 2016. Honourable Speaker, as you are aware, I am also part of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence and our Chair had just spoken on the Committee's behalf to table this Report which was prepared by the former Committee, chaired by the former Chair, Honourable Col. Netani Rika.

Honourable Speaker, as part of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, we had been privy to a number of reports by the Fiji Police Force over the period and we are also quite fortunate to have been guests of the Fiji Police Force recently and witnessed first-hand the comments that had been raised just previously by the Honourable Prime Minister in terms of the Police Force modernising, capacity-building and capability-building to be able to respond better to the role for which the Force is responsible for.

Honourable Speaker, this is also an opportune time to comment also on the Report as being prepared by the former Committee and raise some other issues as well that were brought before that Committee which still persists at the moment with the Police Force despite all the efforts that the Commissioner and his staff are committing themselves to, to help build capacity and capability of the Force and to keep Fiji and its people safe. Honourable Speaker, there are many things in the Report that the Committee had highlighted.

I would like to, first of all, before going into the Report, to thank the Commissioner of Police and the Fiji Police Force for the work that they are doing. For me, the Fiji Police Force is also an element of my own family and my own family members are part of the Force. I respect their level of service and responsibility that they have in executing their duty for keeping the country safe as a Force.

Honourable Speaker, having said that, I alluded to earlier that there are many issues within the report that also need to be highlighted. I go back, Honourable Speaker, this morning to the Ministerial Statement by the Honourable Minister for Defence with regards to crime that is now a major issue for our country and also on the issue of drugs, and this is a continuing fight.

I know in one of our discussions in one of our Committee Meetings that the Police Force, the Deputy Commissioner came with members of his staff to tell the Committee that the Police is now creating a Narcotics Division within the Police Force, in respect to that. That is good and I think we must also acknowledge that this is not solely Police responsibility, particularly that these issues should really be tackled at the highest level of our leadership and it must involve our community and we should all contribute towards finding a solution to these major drug issues that currently face our country and require a whole of a national approach to deal with it.

I go back on that particular issue, Honourable Speaker. I know it is going to pop up at some time later, as I had alluded to earlier on this morning but it needs to be continuously now raised for discussion and debate so that something needs to be done about it and the Police need every help to curb this situation and also to be able to provide for our children's future that we all desire for them to live in.

I want to focus also on some aspects raised by the Report here, Honourable Speaker, particularly in the Report also mentioned the Required Fitness Level (RFL) standards for the Force and we believe recently that a number of Police officers, there were some fatalities during the conduct of the RFL test for the Force. This has also been brought to the Committee for discussion in terms of the suitability or the appropriateness of the test that Police officers had to undergo, whether it is actually appropriate for the outcome of the physical work that the Police officers undergo.

There is a debate about this but the issue is raised again whether it is actually suitable because it is raised in the Report, I would like to ask that this being at the prerogative of the Commissioner and his staff to have a look at this. I know the Commissioner said that he had given enough time for the Police officers to get themselves fit before they underwent the test. But whether the test itself was appropriate to determine the fitness assessment of the Police officers to undergo or to do Police work is a subject in question here. So I am going to raise that again and hopefully that the Police Force would be able to have a look at that as an issue.

Honourable Speaker, I want to focus next on the issue of public perception about the Police Force. Now, Honourable Speaker, the motto of the Fiji Police is *Salus Populi* meaning service to the people. I must admit that I have this feeling that when capacity is built within the Force, some Police officers who we know are rogue actually take the law to their own hands when they deliver Police responsibility and we know that happens. That was mentioned right here by the Honourable Prime Minister earlier on about a case that existed.

The requirements of the law are quite clear and, Honourable Speaker, if there is anyone that should be first to follow the law, it should be the Police officer applying the law, and they should not be above the law. The perception out there and I think I speak for many who believe that sometimes the Police believe that they are above the law.

That perception breeds a negativity about the Force that the Force does not deserve because the Force is doing a lot of good work. But there are people also within the Force who do not help the Force in terms of looking after the people and creating a good public perception about the Force. So, when they do carry out these duties, people tend to have a negativity stance, I tend to have a negativity viewpoint about the professionalism of the Force and I want to share that before the House today.

I want to also raise at this stage, Honourable Speaker, that I have just received some notification earlier on about the permit for the march for Saturday had been denied. I am raising this and this issue to this Report because there are so many issues that the Police really have to do or we have to do about the Force developing the capability amongst itself. So, I really do not understand the credible intelligence available to the Force where they have repeatedly disallowed people to stand for their rights.

Now, I am going to raise this later as part of the question that I am raising in a motion later on. But I must raise this now as part of this Report because this Report is full of issues that the Fiji Police Force and the Government need to concentrate on in building the Force looking after the people, not denying the people.

We know that it is not the intention of the police to undermine what the people enjoy as their rights, but I know that, but then that needs to be reflected in the functions of the Force.

We are all supposed to be law-abiding citizens and upholding the law. By the same token, we look forward to the police to uphold the law. So, it would be nice for the House to know in terms of what essentially is there for our national security, you tell me - why national security, what is it? Is it the perception of national security, is it active national security? If it perceives threat, is it real threat that people have to be denied continuously, I am told.

So, Honourable Speaker, there are many reports and issues that the police needs to focus on. This is the 2016 Report and when the 2017 Report comes as well, I am sure we are going to be talking about other capability developments within the Police Force.

I looked at the lab when we were there and I was quite happy of what I saw, because it is a new capability that will help the police in prosecution. So, these are just some issues that the police needs help with. There will be more to come but, Honourable Speaker, I believe that there is one thing that the Police Force needs to concentrate on and that is to concentrate on their image.

I was thinking this morning as I come, about the joke about the “shepherd and the wolf”. There are so many red and blue lights coming running after you at the back, you were dragged to the side to allow you to go but after a while when you see they are just rushing off for no reason, the next time you are coming around people, do not react to it, but when they really do need to move to the side people do not, that is when the problem arises, I think I will end that here.

I thank the Force for keeping our country safe, but I would also like to remind the Force that they are the first to uphold the law, thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, for giving this opportunity to contribute to the motion before the House on the Review Report of the Fiji Police Force.

From my own perspective, I believe that the debate in Parliament in relation to the review of reports would be ideal, more effective and fruitful only if the reports are submitted in time on an annual basis, unlike what we experienced as we were deliberating two to three years back.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I suggest that Parliament calls on Heads of Departments (HODs) to submit reports annually before they are reviewed by the Parliamentary Committees and submitted to Parliament for debate.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will fail in my duty as a Member of Parliament if I do not commend the hardworking die-hard police officers despite the increase in serious crimes recently, ...

HON. MEMBER.- *Vinaka.*

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, logically it is under control. I believe we cannot control crime.

We can only do that if we rely entirely on our Holy God, and I wish to quote a Bible Verse from John 1:3: "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made".

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am going to speak very briefly on the issue of the war on drugs which is now a national concern. War on drugs is the campaign led by the Commissioner of Police with the stated aim being to reduce the illegal use of drug and illegal trade of various prohibited drugs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to combat this crime, I call on the Police Commissioner to take very close monitoring over the Drugs Unit's operation, if there is any. Information from reliable sources say that there are networking relating to drug dealers within our nation and there are people in the system who happen to be the instigators and making the operation very difficult.

We need to invest more funds into this Unit in order to combat the crime.

On that note, Sir, I, with my colleagues, support the motion before the House.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, I rise to make a small contribution on the motion before us in terms of the Fiji Police Annual Report 2016. I thank the Honourable Minister for updating us from what has transpired since the Report was formulated.

However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just wanted to highlight some of the issues that have been highlighted in the Report: One is the Mercer Report 2003. Committees have highlighted that the implementation of the Job Evaluation Exercise (JEE) recommendations have been completed, and I would like to inform the House today that there are still some of the officers who are entitled to this particular JEE but have not fully gotten their share of the evaluation exercise or some have only received

one third of the JEE entitlement. Till to date, 2019, they are still awaiting their second, third and final payments in terms of the Exercise regarding the amount that is due to them.

You heard this morning about the Ministerial Statement made by the Honourable Minister on addressing the crime. I think, first things first, and that being attending to the issues in-house. This is one area that needs to be addressed by the Fiji Police Force as rightly highlighted by the Committee, that the payment of the JEE that is currently due to the officers, till today, 2019, they have yet to receive those payments. It is only proper and honourable for the Honourable Minister to ensure that they be paid out.

I think, if possible, he can call the former Committee to ensure that all those officers that were entitled to this JEE since 2003 need to be compensated. They need to be paid out immediately, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of the issues of crime in the Capital City, in the last Parliament session, I have also highlighted in the last Police Annual Report that they need to review the recruitment policies that were introduced where having a driving licence becomes a mandatory requirement to join the police.

I think at that time when we raised the issue in the House, there was a lot of smirks from the other side of the House. We are witnessing the result of that, probably the revised recruitment policy where new recruitments are basically done and driving licence becomes a mandatory requirement, so it becomes detrimental to the policing of the cities and towns where beating of the streets, foot-patrolling becomes eminent and needs to be properly undertaken by the police - becomes a lacking exercise in terms of the policing of the community.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee Reports also highlighted about the *TC Winston* post-policing work. I think that is a very critical element too in this whole Police Report that the welfare of the police officers needs to be properly looked after, as highlighted by the Report, rightly so, probably the Minister needs to start looking into that exercise. If we encounter another similar Category 5 cyclone, is the police now well-equipped and well-resourced to carry out their policing role post-Category 5 cyclone? These are just some of the issues, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that have been highlighted by the Committee, and we thank the Committee for highlighting all these issues.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of domestic security and criminal landscape, I think maybe something that the Honourable Minister needs to highlight to this House, inform the Members whether the Fiji Police Force is well-equipped, well-resourced to encounter these findings of the Committee in terms of the domestic security and criminal landscape.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. First of all, I rise in support of the motion. Some of the comments that are in the Review Report, I think the Committee needs to be congratulated. The Chairperson of the Committee, Colonel Rika, and those that continue to take up the mantle of the work of the Committee. The job of the Fiji Police Force, police force of any country is always a tough job to be able to undertake that. So, I think we should all commend them for the work they do.

Like any other organisation, they have their rooms for improvement, things that always need to be addressed and I think these have been adequately articulated in the recommendations that are included in Part 2 of this Report.

In the Report, the particular issue that I wanted to just talk briefly on because it is related to the mandate that I have in my Ministry, some of the discussions that are in this Report talk about the fact that in the Report, during this period, road fatalities decreased by 23 percent, which is close to the 30 percent reduction target and I think that is good to see. We know, currently, we are in the decade of road safety where we are trying to decrease fatalities and the work of the police is very important in trying to reduce road fatalities in our country. So, that is one particular area I would like to thank the police for working in tandem with other agencies that have responsibility for reducing road fatalities, including the Ministry of Education, LTA and also my own Ministry.

I have noticed from their reports some of the things that they are focused on in order to bring about that reduction in fatalities - sharing of the information between different agencies, consulting and talking to stakeholders and other transport agencies, realigning and revisiting their traffic control division, operations, restructuring, making sure that they fix the way that they go about trying to reduce the road fatalities, introducing traffic management equipment, the training of traffic officers and also putting in additional resources to boost the operations of the traffic enforcement.

Looking at the trends that they have in the Report, you will notice that the fatalities trend - the number of people that are actually passing away in road accidents has fluctuated over the years but our target is to continue to reduce that.

Over the years - 2009, 2012, 2014, showed the years of least fatalities, an increase in 2015, and in 2016, there was quite a drastic drop in fatalities.

In the past 10 years, fatalities seem to occur more in the month of August (and we are right now in the month of August). I am not too sure why they happen in August but I think it is an indicator that we need to take precautions and ensure that there are no road fatalities. Let us ensure that our roads are safe during school holidays. January, August and October are the three months that we need to be worried about road fatalities, the least number of fatalities occur in the months of November and April.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with all these data, one thing that we must bear in mind that we ensure there is safety on our roads. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that the roads are safe for road users, whether you are a pedestrian, a driver or a mere passenger on a vehicle. So we thank the Fiji Police Force for the work that it is undertaking. I think there is a responsibility for us as community leaders and as parents to also pay our bit, even in the other areas they are talking about - the use of drugs.

I think all of us as Members of Parliament we also need to undertake up our own programmes in our own communities, whether it is in our churches or in the areas that we live, to try to teach kids to ensure that they do not go and start using all these drugs that are around. So it is our responsibility to help all these transport agencies, especially the Police, to make sure that the Fiji roads are safe.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I also wish to contribute to the motion before the House in relation to the Fiji Police. And I echo the sentiments expressed by the other speakers about the capacity-building within the Police Force, in particular, we are proud that the capacity-building in the scientific legal cyber policing and forensic functions, Honourable Speaker, is quite admirable.

I am part of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs and we do the Annual Report for the Fiji Intelligence Unit. We normally speak with the Forensic Unit of the Police Force and I must say here,

Honourable Speaker, that these are some very special people, highly skilled, highly trained and Fiji must be proud that we have this Special Unit within the Fiji Police Force.

From intelligence perspective, these are people who keep track on global criminal organisations with money laundering through Fiji, et cetera.

But I express my concern to the Assistant Police Commissioner then, if he was aware that these people are highly marketable and they could be easily poached by other jurisdictions. He is aware of that. In our recommendations at that time in the Intelligence Report that avenue must be made to ensure that these people are retained in Fiji. There are things you can do, packages and the like.

Overall, Honourable Speaker, in what we have learned about the Police, it is a very professional body and I am proud of how the Police life in Fiji, in terms of the maintenance of law and order, but I was quite disturbed over the last couple of weeks when I saw images of mugging in a street of Suva. I said, "What is happening", because I trust the Police. I know they are doing a good job.

They have taken steps, they have taken back the street, they are now patrolling at night, which is commendable and I know that they have the capacity to respond in areas like that.

But having this professional body, who I know subscribed to democracy in its fullest, who made sure that we have a freedom of expression, freedom of speech and all that, I just wonder why they are not comfortable in giving us the full rights to our freedom of assembly? Why are they reluctant? What do they fear, if they do not give us a permit for our people to march, to show, to express their right in public?

HON. MEMBER.- Tell them.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I get the impression, Honourable Speaker, that the professional Police, the Force is very professional and they can do it, they can secure any situation, but someone in leadership is not too sure about the stability of this country, and that is a worry.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Who?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Someone in the leadership is not sure about the state of stability in this country, and that is why the Police are being instructed not to give the permit for this demonstration. So I think you are doing an injustice to the Police Force, that a professional body is not allowed to do what they need to do, to protect our people from expressing their rights.

I think, Honourable Speaker, it is an insult to the professionals in the Police that they, somehow, are not made to give the okay for workers to demonstrate, which is part and parcel of a democratic, free country.

While I applaud the Police and I know they are professional, I am just worried about those who control the leaders of power within the Police Force in a state of fear which we believe is not justified.

Let me just conclude, Honourable Speaker, by saying that that lady who got convicted in Korea, who runs an organisation in Fiji, I believe the Police had a part in it, with Interpol and with the Korean Police and this lady was convicted.

I just wonder, Honourable Speaker, if our Police Force had also investigated how our local workers who work in that organisation are being treated by that organisation.

And I am sure the Honourable Minister for Agriculture should be comfortable with the way that they are okay because if that particular leader was mistreating part of its flock, what about the people or Fijians who were working under her?

If there was no complaint, well and good but it would be very embarrassing for our Honourable Minister here down the line, who discover that the treatment that was given to the flock was also given to the Fijians working under that organisation.

All in all, Honourable Speaker, I commend this Report and I salute the Police Force in the work they do. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Chairperson, you have your right of reply.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, please, allow me to correct a statement by the Honourable Aseri Radrodro about Police wages. According to the Mercer Report, all that has been settled. However, there are some former police officers who have their own grievances. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- That was his right of reply. I gave the floor to him on a right of reply.

Honourable Member, if you have not finished your right of reply, then you can continue.

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I overlooked that I was given that opportunity to make a right of reply, but I have nothing else to say, Sir.

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

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Nays')

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

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- 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.

**CONSOLIDATED REPORT ON THE OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR-GENERAL'S 2014, 2016 AND 2017 ANNUAL REPORTS**

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

That Parliament debates the Consolidated Report on the Office of the Auditor-General's 2014, 2016 and 2017 Annual Reports (*Parliamentary Paper No. 79/2018*) which was tabled on 18th May, 2018.

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

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

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- The Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and Assistant Minister and Honourable Members of Parliament; I am pleased to give my contribution on the Consolidated Report on the Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor-General for 2014, 2016 and 2017.

The Constitution and the Audit Act 1969 provides powers to the Auditor-General to audit the Whole of Government Financial Statement and the Report of all Entities of Government. It also empowers the Auditor-General to conduct Performance Audit on Government Entities to ensure Parliament that the entities are achieving their objectives effectively and doing so economically and in compliance with all relevant legislations.

The Act also extends the scope of audit to include those that are specified under the Public Enterprises Act, comprising Government Commercial Companies, Commercial Statutory Authorities and agencies specified as Off-Budget State Entities in the Financial Management Act.

The Environment Management Act requires the Auditor-General to conduct a sustainable development assurance audit on natural resources managed by Ministries, Department, Authorities and Local Authorities.

For information, the Office of the Auditor-General Officials were invited to explain to the bipartisan Committee a few grey areas that needed to be made clear to the Committee. The responses from the Office were exceptionally positive. The exercise of reviewing the Annual Report was a learning experience for both, the OAG Officials and also for the Standing Committee Members. The documents were compiled and agreed by all the Committee Members following a review of the Annual Report.

In its Annual Report for the financial year 2014, the Office of the Auditor-General acknowledged that the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji provided greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the Auditor-General.

The Office of the Auditor-General submitted category reports on audits completed to Parliament. Staff development during the year focused on Post Graduate and Masters Qualifications.

The OAG attended the Prize Award in the Service Excellence Award during the year, which was a key milestone in its journey towards excellence.

During the financial year 2016 which was for six months period ending 31st July, 2016, a review of OAG during that year by the twinning partner - Tasmanian Audit Office in 2016, gave a Level 1 rating.

This rating indicated that OAG recognised and followed requirements in some instance, but it did not have formal policies and procedures in place. The ideal rating for OAG should have been at Level 3.

In addition, the Performance Audit group which was responsible for carrying out Performance Audit which is one of the legislated requirements of OAG was de-established. This resulted in significant loss of specialised staff.

In the financial year ending 31st July, 2017, the OAG has shown significant progress following the appointment of the current Auditor-General in January 2017. The new leadership team in place, the OAG revised its strategic planning for the financial year, 2018, to the financial year, 2020.

The plan describes its strategic intent and renewed focus on excellence in auditing which include the following:

- Build-up values;
- Adding audit services;
- Align systems and processes to international standards and best practices, including the review of Audit Act 1969;
- Provided the conducive ideal workplace for all its employees.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I am very pleased to report that the Office is tracking very well against its strategic plans. Some of the key achievements during the 2017 financial year were:

- re-establishment of the performance audit group;
- adoption of finance audit methodology aligned with international standards for supreme audit institution;
- introduction of Performance Management System, where staff were rewarded based on performance;
- tabling of audit report for financial year 2015 and 2016 in Parliament
- introduction of health and well-being programme for staff;
- development of human resources and operational policies; and
- development of staff training plans using international benchmark;

The Office of the Auditor-General continues to clear the backlog of audit and provide high quality reports to Parliament. Follow-up audits prepared inform Parliament on the extent to which recommendations made in the Reports of the Auditor-General had been implemented. These outputs indicate that measures put in place through strengthening the Office in the second half of the financial year, have started to show returns. The OAG is creating the required visibility through a revamped website which was launched by former Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The OAG has presented in many forums which were attended by Members of Parliament, in particular the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

In addition, there has been greater interaction between OAG and PAC through meetings and establishment of a working group which intends to build capacity for the PAC secretariat and OAG staff in regards to the expectation of PAC from OAG. OAG had also opened an office in Nadi which provides OAG's presence and auditing services to the Western Division. Moreover, the confidence of the International Public Sector Audit Committee in the OAG had been evident when the Office successfully hosted the INTOSAI Workshop Group on IT Audit in April 2019 for the first time.

Currently, the OAG is preparing to host the 24th Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institution again for the first time. Moreover, in the latest issue of the *International Journal for Government Auditing* mentioned that in May 2019, Fiji's Auditor-General engaged with the local media to release awareness. This was from an article titled, Auditor-General calls for sterner action on non-compliance and published

by Fiji Broadcasting Corporation. Recently, the Auditor-General was the invited speaker during a meeting jointly organised by the United Nations Department on Social and Economic Affairs and the INTOSAI Development Initiative held on 22nd to the 23rd July, 2019 in the UN Headquarters in New York.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, in view of the significant positive development in OAG, I am convinced that Auditor-General is in a much better position than ever before to deliver its function required by the Constitution. Honourable Speaker, Sir, it is important to also note that in accordance with Standing Order 110(2), with respect to the principles of gender equality, the policies that govern the operations of OAG, had been developed in a manner in which it does not discriminate gender in areas of recruitment, employment, compensation, career and personal development.

It is also pleasing to note that OAG currently adopted an Open Merit-Based Recruitment and Selection Policy that the gender profile of the Office continues to reflect an increased trend of recruiting more females over the past three years. In the 2017 financial year, it shows that the number of females by percentage was 51 compared to 47 in the 2016 financial year.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, with those few comments, as the Member moving the motion on this PAC Report, I thank you for the opportunity. *Vinaka*.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Chairperson. Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this motion. I give the floor to the Honourable Leawere. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I rise to make a short contribution on the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Office of the Auditor-General for the years 2014, 2016 and 2017.

At the outset of my contribution, Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to join this House to express our sincere appreciation for the work being done by the Committee in respect of this Report. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the debate on this Report reminds me of an old-age slogan used against rulers by persons for collecting taxes without accounting for them leading to tax boycott, I quote: "No taxation made without representation."

One wonders, Mr. Speaker, Sir, whether that was the cause of over-regulation from 2006 to 2014 which continued with over-taxation. We have gone a step further, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have taxation with representation but spending without audit. That is proven by the fact that there are several big ministries and agencies funded by the taxpayers of this country who have failed to produce their Annual Reports. This does not make the smaller yet important ones immune particularly those trumpeting about the ideals and the principles of good governance.

Just some pressing issues, Mr. Speaker, Sir, arising out of the Report by the Committee and I will touch on a few of them.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, next year Fiji will be 50 years old as a nation, we have come a long way since our Independence during the course of which our accounting practice and standards have changed. The means and ways to manage public finances have changed as well and to decide to open up the affairs of the State by way of good governance practices have altered the conduct of public affairs.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Office of the Auditor-General continues to operate under administration, namely the Audit Act of 1969. I think everyone here in this House and those who have some very basic understanding of accountancy and good governance will agree with the suggestion

coming from the Office of the Auditor-General itself that the Audit Act of 1969 needs to be reviewed or rather updated in line with the modern practices and standards.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the effects of the Civil Service Reform is clearly having its toll in the human resource services in the Office of the Auditor-General. This is being illustrated by the number of staff who have left office for greener pastures in the private sector. The fact is, no one wants to work on short-term contracts. That being so, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is highly unlikely that the Office of the Auditor-General may recruit more competent staff and on the contrary will they dread the prospect of losing more staff should the Civil Service remain in place and the powers and functions of the Office of the Auditor-General are not enhanced or assisted in the immediate future by an updated legislation.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Report makes a mention of decentralising the OAG. We have welcomed this recommendation hoping that this will be done sooner than later and the presence of the Auditor-General in our regional Government station is important to instil the much-needed discipline when it comes to a question of compliance, prudent financial management and being accountable and transparent in the conduct of public affairs.

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the finances of the Office of the Auditor-General needs some scrutiny as we find the office applying for virement and facing issues regarding sellers and suppliers. All these issues, Mr. Speaker, Sir, including the push for technical assistance and equipment bogs down to what the Office gets in the Budget. As if that was not enough, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the debts being owed to the Office of the Auditor-General is yet another financial issue that needs swift action. I cannot understand where the rates collected by some of the Municipal Councils who owed money to the Office of the Auditor-General have gone to, now they want the Ministry of Local Government to assist them to pay this debt.

Fifthly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is widely acknowledged that there are some Government Departments whose audits have been pending for some time. They need to be audited and presented to Parliament. While that Report makes an important point of the backlog, it may be resolved by outsourcing the audit work, the question is, Mr. Speaker, Sir, do we have the money to afford that kind of services?

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am of the strong view that these are some of the pressing issues that arise out of this Report which needs action and expressing the hope that it will lead to the strengthening of good governance and the conduct of our public affairs. With that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for allowing me to contribute to this motion.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I rise to make my contribution on the motion before the House regarding the Auditor-General's Annual Report.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I agree with the recommendations that were prepared by the Committee as I was a Member of it, regarding the decentralisation of the offices of the Auditor-General. I think this is a very important initiative and recommendations that the OAG themselves have highlighted to the Committee, that they need to be set up in other divisions, especially the major divisions such as the Western and Northern Divisions to assist them in conducting their audit activities in a much efficient and effective manner, as we note that Ministries and Departments are set up throughout Fiji. Because of that, it is usually a challenge for them to be travelling to the respective divisional offices to conduct their audit. At times, they are limited by resources, time, timeline and it compromises the quality and the veracity of the report that they produce.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of the autonomy of the Office of the Auditor-General, they have always been requesting to have their own independent legal advice to ensure that they represent an independent organisation whereas at the moment they go through the Government Legal Department which compromises their independence, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

One of the issues that has also been highlighted is the delay in the submission of annual accounts by the respective entities and this is reflected in the report itself where the OAG themselves have highlighted that the responsibility of the preparation of the financial statements rests with the management and the board of the audited clients and there is always a perception that audit clients can submit the financial statements for the sake of meeting deadlines. There is an expectation that audit would undertake its role of correcting those errors and mis-statements, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

That, Mr. Speaker, Sir, shows additional burden that has been placed on the Auditor-General because of the perception that they are there to correct the financial statement that has been presented by the respective entities and in fact their role is just to audit what has been presented.

I would also like to bring to the attention of the House the delayed submission of audited accounts for the respective municipal councils.

As I have already alluded to earlier, one of the challenges too that is being faced by the Office of the Auditor-General is the delay in submission of audited accounts of the municipal councils, say some wayback as seven years and some as wayback as two years but that still shows that the attitude of managers, the attitude of the entities that were supposed to prepare their accounts on time, that were supposed to submit their financial accounts have yet to understand what their role is and the role of the Office of the Auditor-General, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

There is also issues in terms of errors in draft submitted accounts. Some of the accounts that have been submitted have also been highlighted to be not in their correct format and also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it may be a good time to also bring for the information of the House that till to-date, I think the Whole of Government Audit Accounts for 2017, I think the Honourable Minister for Economy might also be aware or he needs to be aware that there is a delay in the submission in the Auditor-General's Report for the Whole of Government for 2016/2017.

While the rest of the Ministries and Departments have submitted their reports with the exception of the Ministry of Economy; Volume 1, Whole of Government Audited Accounts for 2017. And that also brings the question about the accuracy of the accounts that have been submitted. What is the cause of the delay? Why is it that the Ministry of Economy's Audit of Whole of Government Account has special exception in not being submitted on time like the rest of the other Ministries and Departments, Mr. Speaker, Sir?

Also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the review of the Fiji Institute of Accountants Act, this is something that has been raised previously and I also would like to raise it again as part of this Report because they all work hand in hand and similarly for the review of the Audit Act as being alluded to by my colleague, that this is something that the Auditor-General was always looking forward to for the review of the Act, because at the moment, the powers of the Auditor-General comes from relevant sections of the Constitution, but he seems to be a bit confused when government commercial companies and government statutory authorities seem to appoint their own auditors because the article is empowering the Board to appoint their own auditors.

We were always seeking that all those government commercial companies, government statutory authorities like those that have been receiving government grants need to be audited by the Auditor-General's Office and some of those institutions till to date, have not even been submitting their annual

reports. So the ripple-on effect, Mr. Speaker, Sir, goes to show that there is confusion in terms of the role of the Auditor-General as stipulated in the Constitution and the role of the respective board of governors in terms of what is stipulated in their company's policies.

You note that the Auditor-General's Office had highlighted that there has been a review in terms of the corporations' law, but if the Audit Act is subject to review, then there will be a big huge gap in terms of compliance level for the respective entities that come under the audit of the Office of the Auditor-General, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Also, it is proper that what we have also been pushing in previous years, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that all those entities (they call them "Off-Budget State Entities") that have been receiving government grants need to be audited by the Office of the Auditor-General because when they come under the scrutiny of the Office of the Auditor-General, it will come into this House as an audit report instead of an annual report.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the content of the Auditor-General's Report becomes a very comprehensive document in terms of the policies, issues that have been highlighted, anomalies occurring within institutions, those are also highlighted but in terms of the financial audited report, we hardly see anomalies that are happening in institutions highlighted in the annual report.

There is a mismatch, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that needs the urgent, immediate review of the Audit Act to address all these anomalies and gaps in terms of the conduct of the audit work by the Office of the Auditor-General in government institutions, government commercial companies, government statutory authorities to ensure that the principle of good governance, good financial management are properly practised and properly adhered to by the Government of the day. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you have the floor, Sir.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, I wish to make a brief contribution. Firstly, I wish to thank the Public Accounts Committee for preparing this report, especially its Chairman. This is the mother of all committees in the Parliament because it essentially allows us to perform our task, to take the Government into account so that it is transparent and responsible.

More so, I wish to thank the Office of the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General, Honourable Speaker, in my view has been the mainstay of how we hold the other side accountable, that is our job, we cannot do much. We do not have the number, but the Auditor-General's Report helps us to show what they are really doing and to make them transparent and accountable.

Briefly, in relation to what is in front of us, if I turn to Chapter 2 and there it says "Issues raised" and if you allow me to quote, it says, "The Environment Management Act requires the Auditor-General to conduct a Sustainable Development Assurance audit on natural resources managed by ministries, departments, authorities and local authorities", and it goes on.

However, the Office informed that it has not carried out a lot of work in the area of environmental audits, for example, Climate Change audits or extractive industries. It needs to build capacity to do this. This is very important and looking at the Environment Management Act which came into being in 2005 (now over 20 years), I wish to ask the Honourable Minister for Environment - how many environmental audits has he liaised, conducted with the Auditor-General? I am sure there is none and if he has any, he can table that tomorrow.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, I am saying here that you are not doing your job, ...

(Laughter)

... because his law allows him, and if he is really concerned about the environment, how many audits may have been allowed on extractive industries - none; how many audits on Environmental Impact Assessments - none.

The Environmental Impact Assessments are not important - the way I look at it, they are just unnecessary bureaucracy. What is important is how we police it - how you police it and how you prosecute after that? He gave some numbers, how many have you prosecuted?

HON. MEMBER.- None.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I said in the morning that the Minister needs capacity.

(Laughter)

The Minister needs capacity, resources, and that is what the Government should do. He needs many vehicles, environmental officers to police the whole environment.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member is not speaking on the Report. He is going totally haywire, he should focus on the Report. He stands up saying, "I will table the Report tomorrow", he does not understand there is a finalised Order Paper for tomorrow. How can I table that tomorrow?

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I think we should run a workshop for Honourable Members on the other side.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member,

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I was giving an example of laxity on the Honourable Minister's side in not engaging what is already there - 20 years in the law. He can do that and if he cared for the environment, he would have all these environmental audits done.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Just today I said,

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- ... not enough, and the Committee recognises that the Office should be properly resourced to carry out specific environmental audits. So, today, I ask the other side to be serious and then work with the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) because you already have there a way to police our environment. We just need to work on it, and we just need resources.

Going down further, decentralisation of office, it says "The Committee recommends that the Office of the Auditor-General should have an office based in the Western Division." This is moving to autonomy. I agree entirely with the Honourable Minister. We should do this; we should make it more autonomous so that they can do their work independently.

Moving forward, Honourable Speaker, Chapter 3 addresses the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and here it says, I quote:

"... The UN resolution acknowledges the role of supreme audit institutions in fostering Government accountability for the use of resources of their performance in achieving development goals under the Sustainable Development Goals."

It goes on to say, "The Committee notes that the Office of the Auditor-General is currently undertaking two cooperative performance audits related to SDGs. The point that I wish to say here is that, Fiji has a lot to improve on its target on sustainable development goals. We have done nothing. The Honourable Attorney-General has just returned from New York and there he announced and demanded to the UN to allow the environment for Fiji to attain these goals.

The Honourable Prime Minister issued a statement to say that we have gone out to New York to lay bare before all nations what we have achieved unprecedented, but we have achieved nothing ...

(Laughter)

... we have achieved nothing and on intellectual honesty, we should be honest and there are two sources that prove that. First, is the Office of the Auditor-General's Report on the Ministry of Economy on sustainable goals. It says that they have only addressed two goals that they have more or less attained, the others - none. But it raises critical issues on the lack of data because how can you even desire to address and achieve your sustainable development goals if you are lacking in data, no data. Please, Honourable Minister for Economy, can you look into that?

Then you have also the other sources from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) which look after the Pacific. It says that it is very unlikely that all the countries in the Pacific will achieve those so the Honourable Members that side talk about intellectual honesty, and you should be honest to tell the world that we are achieving nothing.

That is my brief contribution, Mr. Speaker, Honourable House, and I thank again the Committee and the Office of the Auditor-General.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Speaker, just a few comments in respect of the Report regarding the Auditor-General's Office. I would like to thank the Committee for their Report. Mr. Speaker, Sir, unfortunately none of the Members from the Opposition actually acknowledges the fact that the Auditor-General's Office now is truly independent, including financially. It is now representing the Budget as a one line item under the Independent Bodies.

Previously, the Auditor-General's finance or the budgetary allocation used to sit within the Ministry of Economy and as we have done now with all the independent bodies, they have their own budgets, so they have single-line budget items like the Parliament, Elections Office, the FCCC, now, of course, the Auditor-General's Office, the Judiciary and, of course, other Commissions that are also independent have one line items. What that proves, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that the general government machinery arm does not interfere in the systems and processes regarding the spend of these respective independent organisations which include, of course, the Auditor-General's Office.

The other point also that was not mentioned, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that if you look at the budgetary allocation for the Auditor-General's Office, for example, in the 2017-2018 Budget, it had a budget spend of \$4.4 million; in the 2019-2020 Budget is a spend of \$6.4 million.

Actually, quite a lot of funds have been increased and in fact I can go back in time and point out how far less an amount the Auditor-General's Office used to receive. There has no doubt been an issue of attrition in respect of the staffing members. Of course, the increased budget will address that and has addressed that.

More so, Mr. Speaker, Sir, given the fact that now we do not have what is on the Opposition seemed to be obsessed about person-to-position post no longer exists. So the Auditor-General who is also the Chief Accountant of his particular independent body has now the ability and indeed the flexibility to offer market rates to his staff and in fact the salary increments have been quite substantial in the Auditor-General's Office for them to be able to not only attract people into the organisation but also to retain them because one of the problems of the past number of decades has been that a lot of good auditors actually come through the governmental system or the Auditor-General's Office and then once they have acquired the skillsets, they get very easily poached by the private sector because the private sector, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we know does a lot of outside audit work also. So that particular risk has also been mitigated.

I also remember when the current Auditor-General was appointed, there was a lot of political comments about his appointment, about him being not the right person and, in fact, I remember having a chat with him about it. I just told him to just focus on his job and do what is right, and that was what he has done. In fact, the results are now being seen.

The other point I also wanted to highlight, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is obviously a misunderstanding. Honourable Leawere obviously, again, has spoken about something that he does not have a full complete knowledge of, or Honourable Aseri Radrodro, if I am not mistaken, about the Act being out-of-date.

Yes, the Act is there, the Act is old, we can revamp that. But, it does not in any way preclude the Auditor-General's Office from applying international standards and best practices that have been adopted over a period of time. The age of the Act does not preclude them from adopting those standards which, of course, points to good governance, accountability and transparency.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other point that I would also like to highlight and also that no one from the other side mentioned that the Office of the Auditor-General, in its work, does not do all the audit itself, it actually outsource audit work.

They actually go out and hire accounting firms to do the audit work themselves for them. Mr. Speaker, Sir, they will, for example, call for tenders, et cetera. They have got their own process, they have got their own procurement process and they will go out and then they hire accounting firms to do the audits for them. Once those audits are done then they present the report to Parliament. So there needs to be an understanding regarding that, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just wanted to also highlight the fact that someone said, "Ah, they all have to go through Governmental legal advice", that is nonsense! It is up to the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General can go to the Solicitor-General's Office, who is an independent body, or the Auditor-General can go to some other legal institution or firm to be able to get legal opinion, and so it is false to say that.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, decentralisation, in many respects can be good, but we have to be careful because when you move to small towns, like the big smoke of Labasa or you move to places like Lautoka, et cetera, it is much smaller than Suva. People bumped into each other almost always. They may go to the same restaurants. The opportunity of you fraternising in public spaces is a lot more enhanced in smaller countries and cities.

So there needs to be even further demarcation between people who will be auditing those civil servants, auditing those State-Owned Enterprises and the Auditor-General's staff. So that is something that we have to be vigilant about. Indeed, they need to be vigilant about that too because we have seen that many a times, it happens, Mr. Speaker, where in smaller towns people tend to fraternise a lot more and that is when we can get blurring of lines and, indeed, conflicts of interest can also arise.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other point that I also wanted to highlight is the matter pertaining to some of the work that the Auditor-General has actually recently done in respect of the work of the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI), which is an autonomous independent non-political organisation that operates an umbrella organisation for external Government Audit Committee. The Auditor-General's Office, of course, is now part of the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions.

Indeed, I think it is next year, Mr. Speaker, Sir, or the year after where the Auditor-General's Office of Fiji will be hosting this international get together of all the independent auditors too. The Office of the Auditor-General now via the INTOSAI, the various multilateral apartments are providing technical institutional training in various areas.

The two last points that I would also like to make, Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of them is that, in other communication, also mentioned to the Auditor-General's Office that the staff at the Auditor-General's Office need to, in certain respects, bring themselves up to speed in regards to the modern day commercial transactions that many of the State-Owned Enterprises actually get into now.

It is very different, we have a use of technology, the digital age is here, so their ability to audit certain functions and, indeed, certain operations of these organisations, whether they are statutory bodies or whether they are actually Ministries, they need to bring themselves up to speed with these types of transactions.

The second point I would like to also raise, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as announced in the Budget, we have also said and, indeed, I think this will be something very helpful for the Auditor-General's Office is, we are strengthening the internal audit capacity within the Ministry of Economy to carry out a lot more audit works themselves across the Ministries. As we have also said, this audit work will be done so that we can actually stop many of the systematic issues.

There is no point in these systemic issues continuously being brought through the Auditor-General's Office, comes to Parliament, we talk about it, it does not necessarily get addressed. So, when you are able to have a very strong internal audit team that cuts across the Ministries, the ability, for example, to spot-check themselves, go into a Ministry where the budget team may pick up certain inconsistencies, then we can fix up some of the systemic issues.

As also announced in the Budget, now the Permanent Secretary for Economy herself or whoever is the Permanent Secretary for Economy, will report untoward behaviour or any inconsistency or any discrepancies the internal audit finds to report it directly to FICAC themselves, as opposed to sending it back to the respective Ministry because sometimes we find that the people involved in those Ministries may actually drag their feet about reporting it further or taking investigations further.

So, she is going to go through the whole plethora of complaints that have been made or audit checks that have just been done in the past that have not been reported or any current ones, or anything going into the future, to actually work with and assist the Auditor-General's Office because the idea is to continuously fix up the systems so that there are less and less problems that actually develop through the system.

I would like to also publicly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank the Auditor-General himself. He is a very quiet, unassuming person, but I think he has done a fantastic amount of good work since he has taken up the position of the Auditor-General. I would like to thank him and the new team that he has actually developed around him, and I would like to, of course, thank the Committee for their work on this Report. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Attorney-General. I give the floor to the Chairperson of the Committee for your right of reply.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, 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 'Nays')

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

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, for the purposes of complying with the Standing Orders with respect to sitting times, I will allow the suspension motion to be moved.

I now call upon the Honourable Leader of Government in Parliament to move his motion. You have the floor, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Honourable Speaker, 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 on today's Order Paper.

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

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

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we still have Schedule 3, which is Oral Questions and Written Questions, thus the request for the extension beyond 4.30 p.m. today.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is open. Does anyone wish to comment? You have the floor, Honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- I have nothing further to add, Sir, thank you.

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. today to complete the remaining items as listed on today's Order Paper.

Does any Honourable Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Nays')

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

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, on that note, we will adjourn for afternoon tea and when we resume in half-an-hour, we will go to the next Agenda Item. I think everyone is in agreement.

We adjourn for afternoon tea.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.20 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 4.51 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I call on the Honourable Pio Tikoduadua to ask the first Oral Question for today, Question No. 160/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

Implementation of the 2016 ILO Recommendations (Question No. 160/2019)

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA asked the Government, upon notice:

Would the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports advise Parliament on the full status of Fiji's implementation of the 2016 ILO Recommendations of the Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association?

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have already responded to the gist of the question on Monday which was asked by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. But in any case, the full status of the ILO Recommendation of the Report of the Committee on Freedom of Association in 2016 has been addressed after the signing of the Joint Implementation Report (JIR) by the tripartite partners.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the signing of the JIR on 29th January, 2016, led to the closure of Fiji's case before the Committee on Freedom of Association.

The JIR 2016 that was signed between the tripartite partners, considered all matters that were raised by the Committee on Freedom of Association. Under the JIR, there were a total of nine matters where seven matters were agreed between the social partners, and this is what I also said on Monday. Mr. Speaker, Sir, these matters were addressed in the Employment Relations (Amendment) Act 2016, that was passed in this august House on 10th February, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as outlined above, this was the timely and proactive approach by the Government. I hope that this response also clarifies this matter for the general public. Too often we heard union leaders harping on these issues as if nothing has been done about it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I have outlined above and as per the legislation, reports and statements from all parties concerned, these matters are done and dusted. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is now time that we move on and concentrate on job-creation and productivity towards growing Fiji as never before. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. LT. COL. P. TIKODUADUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, before I ask my supplementary question, I beg to disagree with the illusions of the Honourable Minister that he had addressed the issue earlier on in the week. But, Honourable Speaker, it would appear that these issues have not been addressed. I alluded to earlier that the Police had just disallowed the Union march on Saturday so it has not considered the recommendations and the agreements with Government

with regards to union and worker's rights. So, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister then why was this march on Saturday disallowed as we have already been informed? Thank you.

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

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. In fact, his question is out of order. The reason is, here we are talking about the nine recommendations. This is the Report that he is talking about and there is no where it talks about permits, strikes, marches. The only two items

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. P.K. BALA.- Can you hear me out? Just hear me out, please. The only two matters that remain to be resolved and as I have said on Monday, that it will be convened by the end of this month and the other one in the coming month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for highlighting some of the issues according to the question that has been asked. But one of the issues that have been raised in one of the Committee Reports is the case of Tevita Koroi. After seven years, nothing has been done, can we have an indication as to what the Government will do to rehabilitate Mr. Tevita Koroi, please?

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

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the case of Tevita Koroi - 2723, is that what you are talking about?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Yes.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I can be permitted to give a response on this particular case tomorrow or Friday. Thank you.

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

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I just like to put on record and perhaps remind the Honourable Minister of one of the violations that are being listed in the Committee of Experts and I quote:

“The Public Order Amendment Act, the Committee once again requests the Government to take the necessary measures to bring Section 8 of the Act into line with the Convention by fully repealing or amending the provisions so as to ensure that the right to assembly is freely exercised under the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Already done.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- That it is repealed or amended to allow that the right of assembly to be freely exercised.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Already done.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- That means no need to apply for a permit, allow the people to march. So I ask the question to the Honourable Minister, why is the Government still failing to amend that provision, to remove the need for anyone to apply for a permit to march? And the refusal of the permit to FTUC to march on Saturday because the Police has refused it. So, why has this thing not been repealed?

HON. SPEAKER.- Do not make a statement, ask your question. Honourable Minister, she has asked the question.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The amendment is in place and in regards to the refusal of permit, as a matter of interest, I have got confirmation from the Commissioner of Police that he has formally written to the applicant and in that same letter, the Commissioner of Police had suggested to the applicant that if he wants further clarification on the refusal, he is most welcome to go and meet the Commissioner of Police.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the next oral question for today and I give the floor to the Honourable Vijay Nath to ask Question No. 161/2019.

Benefits of Engagements of International Defence and Security Partners with
Fiji's Defence and Security Forces
(Question No. 161/2019)

HON. V. NATH asked the Government, upon notice:

In view of the increase in engagements with our international Defence and Security partners as evident in the military exercises currently underway in the North with the US Army, can the Honourable Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs inform Parliament of the benefits of such engagements for Fiji's Defence and Security?

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU (Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I acknowledge the Honourable Vijay Nath for this question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in responding to the question by the Honourable Member, let me just say that the engagement with our international defence and security partners is very, very important in our relations and, of course, in addressing issues that we face.

One may say, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that this is consistent with our foreign policy. As a small country, we are friends to all and enemies to none because it is important for us in terms of our survival and, of course, being relevant as well within the dynamics of geopolitics within the region.

On that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have areas of common interest with these international and bilateral partners and, of course, they support our development aspirations and, of course, the respect of our sovereignty as well. That is something, in terms of our foreign policy that I wish to state while addressing this question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, why the increase in engagements now? There are few drivers. Let me just mention a few: One is the geopolitical shifts in the region. Some may say competition, there is an increased presence, increased competition in the region for many obvious reasons. I will not go into the details. There are risks and threats as well.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think I have mentioned this a few times in this august House when we look at conventional threats, we can say that we are safe but then when you look at non-traditional threats which is sort of the norm today in areas like terrorism, for example, Illegal Unreported Unregulated fishing (IUU) with such a big maritime country with a big EEZ and there is a lot activities happening in our maritime zone, the issues on human trafficking and drug trafficking. And then we have the threats of climate change and disaster. These are the new emerging threats and, of course, the new partnerships are very, very critical for us as well.

The development trends, Mr. Speaker, Sir, developments are good but as we all know, it comes with opportunities and challenges as well. This morning we talked about crime and drug and those have been the issue of discussion this week in this august House because this is a result of the developments that have taken place and we just need to be aware and, of course, prepare accordingly as well.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of our engagements, we have engagements at the multi-lateral level. I can quote the Boe Declaration for the region in terms of the Pacific Islands Forum and, of course, in peacekeeping, we contribute to the global peace security and this is the engagement that we have as well. And of course, we have the bilateral relations as well and if I may quote a few of the key ones:

- (1) With Australia, we have the Defence Cooperation Programme (DCP) as you are well aware of;
- (2) With New Zealand, we have the Mutual Assistance Programme (MAP), these are programmes in place;
- (3) Of course, we have our partners, the USA, we have the Shiprider Agreement with them. Right now as we speak, we have troops from the US on exercise with the Third Battalion in Vanua Levu.

We have the UK as well, India, Japan, some countries we have defence corporation programmes or otherwise we just have MOUs or an umbrella corporation arrangement. This is where all these relations and, of course, I have talked about our foreign policies and this is the link between our foreign policy and military diplomacy as well, so we have to be seen to be engaged.

What are the benefits? Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have talked about the threats and we, as a small country, have limited capacities and capabilities and we cannot handle this alone. If I may just quote, Australia, for example, Mr Speaker, Sir, the heads of border agencies and the chiefs of securities had meetings in Fiji earlier this year and there is another meeting organised in Australia in October this year. The benefit is, we, as small countries, will be able to work together with our friends and partners to enhance our own local arrangements in as far as security risks and the threats are concerned.

Likewise, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of inter-operability, we need to have an understanding with the foreign forces on how to work with them; terminologies, technologies, best practices. I will use *TC Winston* as an example. It was very easy for the Australian Defence Force and the New Zealand Defence Force to fit into the arrangements that we have here because of this corporation and the regular exercises and trainings that we have with them, compared to Vanuatu when they had *TC Pam* in 2015, it was a big issue for them because Vanuatu only has a police force. They do not have such arrangements that we have, so inter-operability, this is very very important.

On sharing of information and platforms, Mr. Speaker, Sir, very soon, Honourable Members of this august House will be hearing terms like “fusion centres”. That is the way we are doing things now; fusion centres. There is a fusion centre now, I am not sure if some members of the Committee has been to the Naval Base, there is a fusion centre there now particularly, and in that fusion centre, although it is

in the naval base, we have Fisheries 24/7, Customs there 24/7, and decisions and sharing of information is made there and then. These are the new platforms in terms of sharing of information, not only domestically but these centres have connections to our neighbours as well.

Next week, in Tuvalu, there will be discussions about a regional fusion centre so that we have our own domestic arrangements and then these national centres will have a link to the region because no country can afford to work in isolation because we need to share this.

Of course, best practices and technology as well, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have to partner with our foreign partners. I will quote “satellite”, for example, we do not have our own satellites but we can ride on the satellites offered by our bigger partners as it transits our region. We can access live data from these satellites and, of course, we can use that which enhances the security arrangements that we have. Those are some of the benefits and the background behind these arrangements, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I would like to thank the Honourable Minister especially in engaging with the United States of America (U.S.) and empowering our military in terms of the exercise that has been conducted. I did hear the Honourable Minister saying something about drugs. Can that be transferred to the engagement of our Police Force with the drug agencies in the U.S. in terms of partnership? That is my question, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Yes, Mr. Speaker, Sir. We have connections with the U.S. I have talked about heads of security and heads of border agencies. There is one arrangement, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am sorry I have talked about the regional arrangement and I only concentrated on the Bonn Declaration which is under the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), but there is another group not directly linked as yet to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) but it is called the South Pacific Defence Ministers Forum and, of course, we have the police forum as well.

So, in the South Pacific Defence Ministers’ arrangement because we share these common threats, the key member countries are:

- Australia;
- New Zealand;
- Fiji;
- Tonga;
- Papua New Guinea;
- Chile (because of the Pacific and most of that, Chile is in that grouping as well).

Then, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have our core group: France (because of the French Territory); we have U.S. in that team as well; and, of course, we have the United Kingdom as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, currently the U.S. President Trump has withdrawn from the nuclear treaty agreements with Russia that was negotiated during the Soviet days, known as Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and rising up tension between the two superpowers. They are now going back into building their nuclear arsenal.

Secondly, China is building an artificial island in the Northern Pacific. It is upsetting the western alliance, rising up tension between the U.S. and China. In a scenario like this, how long will our policy: “Friends to all and enemy of none” last? Have you considered that? Thank you.

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

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is why I started with our foreign policy because we create the conditions for our foreign policy. I have talked about our sovereignty and our right to make sovereign decisions must be respected.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, areas of common interest: This is where we share and have arrangements and, of course, we are guided by international rule of law and best practices according to the UN Charter, Mr. Speaker, Sir. When we have arrangements, when we talk with our partners, let me assure this august House, we make these known to our partners. We welcome them and, of course, our development aspirations as well, so this is well-understood between the parties and we value the relationship we have but at the same time, these are the guiding principles for us in terms of maintaining such relations. Of course, we watch very closely how the major powers address and play within these changing dynamics, very interesting times in terms of our foreign policies and international relations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister. We move on to the third Oral Question for today.

I give the floor to the Honourable Inosi Kuridrani to ask Question No. 162 of 2019. You have the floor, Sir.

Measures in place for Harvesting Standing Cane in 2019 Harvesting Season
(Question No. 162/2019)

HON. I. KURIDRANI asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry inform Parliament the measures in place to ensure all ‘standing cane’ will be harvested in the 2019 crushing season?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Prime Minister, Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to the Question being raised by the Honourable Inosi Kuridrani. Mr. Speaker, the average standover cane for the past three years is less than 1.5 percent of the total harvestable cane, that is for the past three years. That means, Honourable Speaker, 98.5 percent of sugarcane in Fiji is harvested. This is already a great accomplishment.

The timely fraction of cane that was left standing in previous years came as a result of shortages in labour, poor harvesting efforts and the abandonment of farms - all the issues are being addressed head-on by this Government because we are committed, Mr. Speaker, to ensuring that every sugarcane farmer in Fiji is armed with the tools and assistance to harvest every last bit of their crop.

Honourable Speaker, while we are being blessed with favourable weather, the industry has been put in a position of great strength to take advantage of this favourable condition. Thanks to the

holistic support of this Government that despite the opposition and distraction, our position has only increased, including our most recent national budget.

Under the new budget, as you may know, Honourable Speaker, a total of \$70.4 million has been allocated to the industry, comprising of \$4.8 million for Operating and \$65.1 million for Capital Expenditure that has been allocated to the industry.

This budget, Honourable Speaker, is aligned to the Fiji Sugar Corporation's newly adapted 5-years Strategic Action Plan (SAP), that aims to implement strategies to reduce cost and improve both the services and the infrastructure related to cane cultivation, harvesting and transportation.

The SAP is based on targeted interventions to reverse the decline in sugarcane production and through adopting new innovations to assist farmers in reducing cost of production and improving their viability, including undertaking measures to ensure that all standing-over cane is harvested, transported and processed at the mills and income is generated, both for the farmers and FSC from sugar sales.

I want to repeat that for the Honourable Kuridrani, Honourable Speaker, and I want to say that the SAP is based on targeted interventions to reverse the decline in sugarcane production and through adopting new innovations to assist farmers in reducing cost of production and improving their viability, including undertaking measures to ensure that our standing-over cane is harvested, transported and processed at the mills and income is generated, both for the farmers and FSC from sugar sales.

Honourable Speaker, over 20 percent of the total of \$13.4 million of the \$65.1 million (Capital Expenditure) has been allocated specifically to address issues related to cane transportation and harvesting [\$13.4 million of the \$65.1 million (Capital Expenditure) has been allocated specifically to address issues related to cane transportation and harvesting]; a total of \$300 million is allocated for upgrading of cane access roads and installation of culverts; \$4 million for the cane cartage from Penang to Rarawai; \$0.5 million for the use of machineries related to farm mechanisation, including purchase of tractors that can be used for carting of real carts and caged bins; and \$5.9 million for procurement of trucks that subsidises FSC cartage of cane to mills.

During the current harvesting season, the FSC will acquire a total of 117 new trucks, comprising of 100 Isuzu and 17 Mitsubishi vehicles, and distribute them across all mills, all mill areas to ease cane transportation issues, especially for billet cane; 16 of these trucks have arrived and already been distributed to few sectors; 27 will be distributed this week while the rest, as I have said before, will be delivered before end of August.

Mr. Speaker, three years ago, our Government began our aggressive and ambitious campaign to hold a modernised sugarcane industry campaign that has brought significant confidence to our farmers. Anyone who actually takes the time to visit our farms and mills will see the fruits of this campaign with their own eyes. For instance, mechanisation of cane harvesting, in 2015 there were only 15 mechanical harvesters but today, Mr. Speaker, that number has more than quadruplet.

There are now 71 harvesters in operation, of which 35 were bought through the assistance provided by my Sugar Ministry, under the Farm Mechanisation Program. With the increase in a number of harvesters, it is expected that over 40 percent of the total cane will be mechanically-harvested this season. As announced in this year's Budget, we are also trialling new hilly harvesters that can navigate difficult terrain, that is all progress you can see, Honourable Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, in some harder-to-reach areas, especially those in the difficult hilly terrain I just mentioned, our sugarcane farmers can find it difficult to find means of harvesting, whether by man or machine, that is why we are forever grateful to the Fiji Correction Service Department and the Methodist Church of Fiji, both of which have generously helped fill any gaps in cane harvesting since the past few years.

In 2018, a total of 10,928 tons of cane were harvested by the prisoners and around 14,500 tonnes will be harvested by them during this season, giving them a source of income and a way to contribute while serving their time. Complementing these efforts, Honourable Speaker, cane cutters deployed through the assistance of the Methodist Church, managed to harvest 35,000 tons of cane in 2018 and it is expected to double the volume in 2019 because of the increase in supply of cane cutters who use this as a way to build camaraderie and raise funds for church projects.

In order to prepare for the 2019 Season's targeted volume of 1,870,000 tonnes, FSC undertook major upgrades at all the three mills before the beginning of crushing:

- At the Lautoka Mill, a new electronic control system was installed and refurbishment was undertaken on the Mill's diffusor;
- The boiler at the Rarawai Mill was refurbished; and
- Rollers were replaced in the Labasa Mill.

Mr. Speaker, despite the mills cane crushing have a slow start in the first few weeks of the season due to both - the shortage of supply and teething issues as we transition to improve the equipment, FSC has now seen the improvements in all mill performances.

The FSC specialised crew of steam turbine engineers are working on all the three Mills, to ensure stable operations of the Mills and that the Mills receive and crush their respective cane supply targets through the crushing period:

- 690,000 tonnes at Lautoka Mill;
- 680,000 tonnes at Labasa Mill; and
- 500,000 tonnes at Rarawai Mill.

FSC has also adopted a 'one mill' concept following the closure of Penang Mill and loss of the rail bridge across the Ba River caused by *TC Josie* and *TC Keni* last year. Under this concept, certain volumes of cane are transferred to the Lautoka Mill from the Rarawai Mill, to assist in balancing the season, length and mill stoppages.

Early last year, Honourable Speaker, the Fijian Government had received assistance from the Government of India to carry out a survey on our existing railway networks, and we are now awaiting the report to plan the upgrading of these networks - an upgrade that will bring unprecedented ease of transport and efficiency to our sugarcane industry. These are the type of big ideas that we have and which the Opposition lacks.

The upgrade of our railway system will be complemented by the general support of the European Union which provided for the refurbishment of 40 caged bins, dramatically bolstering FSC's existing stock of 20 caged bins. This will provide a greater level of ease to farmers using rail to deliver the cane to the mills.

Mr. Speaker, with each passing day, the cane supply is progressively improving and this has contributed positively to the Mills' operational efficiency.

As of just last week, a total of 414,047 tonnes of cane has been crushed with 38.365 tonnes of sugar made from all the three Mills;

- The Lautoka Mill is crushing 250 tonnes of cane per hour;
- Labasa Mill at 240 tonnes per hour; and the
- Rarawai Mill is gradually improving from last week's crushing rate of 204 tonnes per hour.

At this rate, it is expected that the crushing at the Labasa Mill will be completed in 14 weeks, in 16 weeks at the Lautoka Mill and 18 weeks for Rarawai Mill.

In addition to these wide-ranging Government initiatives, Honourable Speaker, we are also planning to introduce mechanised cane planting technology in the next season. So, all that said, Honourable Speaker, there are still more exciting things on the horizon for the Fiji Sugar Industry.

We thank all the stakeholders who are the lifeblood of the Fijian sugarcane industry, especially the cane growers, the cane cutters, lorry drivers, locomotive drivers, the mill operators and the staff and management of FSC and the Sugar Research Institute of Fiji, who are dedicated to tapping into Government support and making the 2019 cane harvesting season a success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Prime Minister. Honourable Inosi Kuridrani for your supplementary question.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I rise to ask a supplementary question: I thank the Honourable Minister for his answer, however, my question is, I have got the latest report from the Fiji Sugar Corporation with an update that 433,489 tonnes of cane had been crushed by the three Sugar Mills, producing 40,085 tonnes of sugar.

In that case, the tonnes of cane to tonnes of sugar ratio is about 10.81 tonnes of cane to 1 tonne of sugar. Compared to the 2017 achievement, tonnes of cane to tonnes of sugar was 9.01, an increase of almost 2 tonnes of cane from the previous record. My question to the Honourable Minister is; why is there great variation in the tonnes of sugar, despite the heavy funding and technology available?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you. Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Kuridrani is talking about TCT, and I suggest that he waits until the end of the crushing season before he comes up with the question on the variation in the ratio. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Honourable Prime Minister has advised the House that 17 new trucks will be bought to assist in the cartage. Can he assure this House that this will not interfere with the individuals who have trucks of their own and rely on the trucking business to cart sugarcane?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- No, it will not interfere with other people's business, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the next question.

Qualification Standards Offered for Music Class
(Question No. 163/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports inform Parliament of the qualifications standards offered for Music Class at the Youth Training Centre at Valelevu?

HON P. K. BALA (Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I also thank the Honourable Member. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Youth Training Centre at Valelevu offers Certificate IV in Music. This certificate level qualification was confirmed after the Fiji Higher Education Commission Moderation and Assessment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Fiji Higher Education Commission Assessment is in line with the Fiji National Qualification Framework. This Programme is offered by the FijiFirst Government, free for youths who are seeking the opportunity to venture into music as an employment opportunity into the creative arts. This is in line with the principle outlined in Section 3.1.8 on Youth and Sports Development in the 5-Year and 20-year NDP 2017.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our qualified youths from the Valelevu Training Centre have been taken into our Disciplined Forces and in the entertainment area, thus providing a sustainable pathway for the youth employment. The Youth Training Centre, as part of the National Youth Band, is up for a review to open up new possibilities and pathways for the participants.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, currently, we are in the process of drawing up the project note to carry out this important exercise, in particular, the Ministry aims to expand the programme at Valelevu and put into place a more-structured intake and output structure.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, for this opportunity.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I fail to see why the question has to be brought into the House. He can just tap you on the back and ask that question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the Honourable Minister for his response and the question I would like to pose to the Honourable Minister is, is there any pathway for those who have graduated from Valelevu to pursue and go for further studies, like in universities? Are there chances for them to go to these universities after they have graduated from Valelevu?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, are you just asking a question on this?

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Yes.

HON. SPEAKER.- Your original supplementary question, he has already promised to address that in a couple of days' time. You have the floor, Honourable Minister.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, he is more worried about who is asking me what but I have already responded and explained the pathway which is from the Training Centre, the graduates are being taken into the Disciplined Forces.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. P.K. BALA.- Yes!

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Niko Naiwaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can the Honourable Minister advise the House whether there are measures in place to increase qualification? They are only receiving Certificate in Music. What about Bachelor of Music, are there plans in place to increase the qualification or will they end there?

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

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. As I have said in my response, we are going to review the entire operation of the Valelevu Training Centre and this will become part of the review.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Aseri Radrodro.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I just want to ask a supplementary question regarding the Valelevu Youth Band Programme.

Since the Honourable Minister has assured that every graduate from that Youth Band has been absorbed into the respective Disciplined Force, but there are some who did not get through that pathway and some of them have gone into trying to explore opportunities in the Ministry of Education being P MEC Teachers. But they are facing problems in terms of not being recognised by the Ministry of Education qualification criteria.

Can the Honourable Minister assure that those who had gone past that Programme and who are now teaching but yet to be recognised by the Ministry of Education because the Ministry of Education does not even recognise the Certificate that has been issued by the National Youth Band?

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

HON. P.K. BALA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. As I have said, there will be a review. We have found gaps, we have observed the shortfalls and that is why if you have gone through the Budget allocations, you will see that there is an allocation for this review and all these things will be taken into account.

Let me go back on the pathway that I mentioned earlier on: I did not say that all of them have been taken in by the Disciplined Forces but I did say that that is the pathway that some of them can take, and the rest of them as we have mentioned have gone and have attachments with schools and other entertainment groups.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the fifth Oral Question for today. I give the floor to the Honourable Jese Saukuru to ask Question No. 164/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

Status of Unsurveyed iTaukei Lands
(Question No. 164/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry update Parliament on the status of unsurveyed iTaukei Lands?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Honourable Prime Minister, Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry).- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I rise to respond to the question from the Honourable Jese Saukuru.

Honourable Speaker, Government directly funds the surveying of *iTaukei* land in order to give our landowners a clear picture of how their land is demarcated. Basically, our survey efforts give landowners a sense of exactly where their land boundaries are. Equipped with that information, our landowners can plan out their future development to a more exact degree. There will be no questions of where you can build and where development must end as future land disputes will be avoided entirely.

Mr. Speaker, we have successfully surveyed just under 40 percent of all *iTaukei* land in Fiji, that includes the following:

- Malolo Group;
- Vatulele Island;
- Yasawa i Rara Island;
- Nacula;
- Nacula Island; and the
- *Tikina* of Namosi.

There are three survey teams working simultaneously on the following unsurveyed areas in Lau Province. Demarcation and survey works have commenced at Lakeba late last year in 2018 and we will progress until completion which is earmarked in 2023. So far, 5 percent has been surveyed and the remaining 95 percent is unsurveyed. This is in Lau Province, specifically in Lakeba.

In Serua Province, demarcation and survey have started in the *Tikina* of Deuba, Nuku and Serua and shall continue to the *Tikina* Batiwai thereafter. It is estimated that the demarcation and survey work will be completed in 2025; 8 percent of the *iTaukei* land in Serua had been surveyed while 92 percent, of course, yet to be surveyed.

Ba Province demarcation and survey had started in Ba in 2016 and the *Tikina* of Nadi and Sikituru and shall progress to the other three *Tikinas* in Sabeto, Vuda and Vitogo. It is expected that the demarcation and survey work will be completed in 2021. As of now, a total of 14.35 percent has been surveyed with 85.65 percent, of course, is yet to be surveyed.

The following unsurveyed lands will be included in the work once the program I mentioned earlier is completed;

- *Tikina* Sanima in Tavuki, Kadavu;
- Koro Island;
- *Tikina* of Komave in Nadroga;
- *Tikina* of Cikobia in Macuata; and
- *Tikina* of Veinuqa in Namosi.

Carrying out land surveying, Honourable Speaker, of course, is an intensive effort. We have equipped our surveyors with the latest in surveying technology, even still the work often requires that survey teams demarcate land boundaries on foot whether they are working in maritime regions - in deep rural pockets of the country, our surveyors face serious geographical challenges.

Aside from the rough terrain, climate impacts have not only stalled many surveying projects, they have disrupted land boundaries right under the surveyor's feet forcing them to rework certain sections. For example, surveying the District of Namosi, it took over 10 years to fully complete and the Malolo Island and the Yasawa-i-Rara Island which took four years to complete.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, it must also be noted that the surveyors also have to deal with disputed boundaries and many a time this prolongs the completion of the respective surveys. Boundaries that are adjacent to each other for numerous issues in particular when valuable resources are at stake.

Our latest budget saw the sustained funding of \$176,000 and \$260,000 continue to our surveying and demarcation efforts respectively. We currently have survey teams working in Lau, Serua and Ba. Next they will be moving on to Kadavu, Koro, Nadroga, Macuata and Namosi as I had mentioned. That entire effort, Honourable Speaker, will be years in the making, but we will continue to ensure our surveyors are well equipped to carry out their work as accurately and efficiently as possible. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for the response. A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, Sir, would be centered around surveyed land for the Naitasiri province. I did not hear any indications of surveyed land for the Naitasiri Province given it is one of the second biggest land parcels owned by the Province, so can we get an indication whether Naitasiri is part of these surveyed plans that has just recently been announced by the Honourable Prime Minister?

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

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. To Honourable Aseri Radrodro, it may be the second biggest Province in Fiji, but it is still a Province and it will be worked out later.

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

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I thank the Prime Minister for his answer to my question. Would the Prime Minister advise whether there is a timeline for the completion of the survey of all iTaukei land, if there is a timeline? I know they are facing a lot of problems with the rough terrain and the budget allocated for them, but do we have a timeline for the completion of the survey of all iTaukei lands?

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

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- I would like to say next year but, Honourable Speaker, I have just mentioned the problems that we go through in conducting the survey. There is no timeline, there will be years in the making.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Mitieli Bulanauca?

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, just a supplementary question: With regard to these surveys, I am not too sure what kind of survey is being done here, whether it is through cadastral survey or GPS or NLC-type of survey where you do not really need much more accuracy. Secondly, if there is any dispute between two *mataqali* (land owning units), is there a process to deal with that dispute?

HON. MEMBER.- Yes, there is.

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

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Honourable Speaker, I do not know what the Honourable Member is talking about when he mentions the different types of survey. There is only one survey that we know, that is what our surveyors are undertaking and if there is any dispute, we leave it to those chiefs or the landowners to sort out their disputes before we go back in. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, we will move on to the next question. The sixth oral question for the day, I give the floor to the Honourable Alvick Maharaj to ask Question 165/2019.

Progress on Establishment of Fruit Tree Orchards
(Question No. 165/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment explain what the progress is on the establishment of Fruit Tree Orchards?

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you aware, fruits are very important for a healthy and well-rounded community. Fruits are low in fat and sodium content. It is a source of many essential nutrients such as vitamins and minerals.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while we may say that we are self-sufficient in terms of food security but nutritional security is an issue in the urban areas, amongst the squatter communities, a concern and a problem in the interior and maritime division as well. While they are fully-fed but balanced nutrition is a major issue. It has also been picked up in numerous studies by the Ministry of Health and Fiji Food and Nutritional Council.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, last year, I was chalking up a number of new programmes and I had a discussion with the Honourable Minister for Economy and he had a discussion with me that when we move around Fiji, we see fruits sold alongside the road which are from trees grown wildly. If we need to secure the nation, one may argue that we need to establish fruit tree orchards so that we have the volume of supply, so that given the volume, it will be accessible and secondly, prices will be reasonable.

Thirdly, we will be able to get consistent supply of these fruits.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, fourthly, him being the Minister of Economy, we will also be able to exploit the market particularly in countries like New Zealand and Australia where we have people, our own people there with the same taste and preferences, and psychologically, if they get the mango, let us say, from here and mango from other countries, psychologically, they will say, Fiji mango I know much better, tastes better, et cetera. That kind of niche market that we have there, we need to exploit, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, basic statistics will tell us that there is a huge potential for us to exploit that market. Mr. Speaker, Sir, using the last five years data, annually, we export \$1.36 million worth of fruits to other countries, which is about 350,000 metric tonnes. Similarly, annually, using the last five years data, on an average, we are importing \$16.3 million worth of fruits to Fiji. This is 5.5 metric tonnes every year. Interestingly, if I use the statistics, you will see that our export value per metric tonne is \$3.9 million whereas import value per metric tonne is \$2.9 million. What does that suggest?

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- That the fruits that we are exporting

(Honourable Member interjects)

I will speak to the Speaker, not to you.

(Laughter)

You still do not get the Parliamentary protocols. You do not get the protocols.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, I was trying to elicit a very important thing out of these statistics - simple computation but I, sort of, juggled around, I am saying 12 metric tonnes of fruits that we are exporting, the value is \$3.9 million. In other words, the fruits that we are exporting is \$2.9 million. Interestingly, why? Because the fruits that we are exporting, psychologically, people prefer this and they are willing to pay more, and the fruits that they are importing per metric tonne or per kilogram, if you convert this, the unit value is much lower - huge potential, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us say, if we are able to grow these fruits (5.5 metric tonnes every year), we will be able to save \$16.3 million. How can we do that? Not these small backyard fruits that we got. That is all right for home nutritional security, for local nutritional security.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we need to exploit the market out here in our own backyard, the tourism sector, restaurants and the university hostels where massive amounts of fruits are purchased every day.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, having this in mind, we are establishing fruit tree orchards. Last year

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Listen, listen! Last year, with the existing budget, we juggled around and this is what we have. We have got

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- What I am saying is that, there was no specific line item.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- We have established six guava (green pearl variety) orchards, so 100 plants in each orchard in the Western Division. There are now, at the moment, six established guava orchards.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Yes, exporting, what is wrong with that?

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Last year, we established eight avocado orchards in the Western Division, 50 plants each for each orchard.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.-We have established one breadfruit orchard in Sigatoka - 100 plants, one orchard.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our target is that, every year we want to establish 40 orchards for these fruits:

- Avocado;
- Guava;
- Mango;
- Breadfruit;
- Baigan fruit.

These are the first-phase fruit tree orchards that we want to establish.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is what is envisaged for the next three years (4 X 3 = 12), 120 orchards we want to have over the three-year period. Once we have done that, Honourable Speaker, Sir, we do not want to move into Phase 2 of other exotic fruits.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Like what?

HON. MEMBER.- Pea fruit.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mangosteen, soursop. I do not want to mess up with the spelling.

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the plan we have. We have got the vision, we know where we want to go, we know how to go there. We are organising our research stations where we are establishing the nursery for this and carting materials, seedlings and in some cases seeds, other places have replanting materials. It is not something that you can do overnight because you need to establish the number of seedlings.

For dragon fruit, we are looking at establishing six dragon fruit orchards over the next six months period, 60 percent of the work has been done on the dragon-fruit orchard.

I want to thank all those who are involved in this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, with exciting times ahead.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister.

Honourable Lynda Tabuya, on a supplementary question, you have the floor.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I want to commend the Taiwanese Government for the Project in Sigatoka which I was fortunate of visiting, with their research facility there and also doing the breeding of these guava trees.

I thank the Minister for encouraging their project, they have actually acknowledged him. One issue they mentioned was that, there is not enough farmers who are interested in doing this.

My question to the Minister is: you have only said “six orchards”, and the rate that they are churning that out is not enough for farmers to be interested in this. So my question to the Minister is, what incentives are they providing for farmers to take up the project of food orchards? What are the incentives

to make it easier for farmers to be able to have these orchards, six is not a lot, we are looking at the whole country. So that is my question to the Honourable Minister. Thank you.

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned that last year we started. There was no specific budget, so we started in a small way, that is why the numbers are small and it has no reflection of interest out there. There is a huge interest out there and she mentioned about what incentive we have?

What we are doing is that, we advertise, we have got a list of farmers who are interested in these orchards so we are waiting for the budget. What we are doing now is: we are preparing, ploughing preparing the land, providing the seedling, all they need to do is to plant it and then we give them the manual on how they need to look after the plants until they grow up.

So that is the incentive, they do not have to pay for the planting materials, they do not have to pay for the land preparation cost, we pick it up. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Nawaikula.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- The Honourable Minister said that they only started last year. Could you explain to the House what difficulties were there before that in the last 14 years that could not allow them to start earlier on?

HON. R.S. AKBAR.- Why only 14? Why can you not go back 20 years?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- No, 14 years. This thing only started last year.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are those on the other side who always talk about the history, the past, they are in the past, they live in the past. We are talking about the future ...

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. GOVT. MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, you will see that some of those on the other side always talk about the history, the past, they live in the past. We are talking about the future, we are talking about where we are taking the country, we are talking about the vision. They are talking about the past, they want to live in the past - that is where you want to live in.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order! Last supplementary question on this Question.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I must commend my colleague for this very promising vision and I think Fiji will do well out of this.

HON. MEMBER.- *Dina, dina.*

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I do not want to go back to the past but for something this exciting which is really generating a lot of interest, what has he learnt from the Agriculture revolution that was promised here but did not take place. Something he must have learnt that

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- He missed out.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- He could pick up from that - was it resources or was it expertise, I mean, there was a huge promise made in this House about the Agriculture revolution, but if you look at the stalls built on the roads, most of them are empty or half empty.

So the revolution did not take place, so we would like him to succeed, but what has he learnt from the failure of the Agriculture revolution, please, can you share that with us? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to tell you that I am building up on the excellent work that the Honourable Minister has done. There is nothing wrong with it, I do not know where he comes with this terminology that he has failed. You do not see results overnight. If you are getting into livestock, it will take years; if you want to talk about trees - mangosteen tree takes 15 years to bear fruit.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- You cannot get into a mangosteen orchard in one year.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- It is unfair for you to ask this kind of questions to create division this side. Look at what is happening that side, a total mess.

(Laughter)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- So many divisions, so many pockets all over.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the next Oral Question for today - the seventh Oral Question and I give the floor to the Honourable Salote Radrodoro to ask Question No. 166/2019. You have the floor, Madam.

Addressing increasing rate of Violence against Women and Children
(Question No. 166/2019)

HON. S.V. RADRODRO asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation explain how effective the legislation, policies and programmes in place in addressing the increasing rate of violence against women and children?

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA (Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation).- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for the question - to explain how effective the laws, policies and programmes in place are in addressing the rate of violence against women and children.

Honourable Speaker, I would like to start from the Domestic Violence Act of 2009. Prior to 2009, there was no specific law to address domestic violence, so why am I picking on domestic violence and sexual offences against women and children? The reason is that, if we are to look at statistics coming out of the DPP's Office, High Court and Magistrate's Court in Fiji, this is one category of rape and sexual offences against women and children, we are looking at about 90 percent of the victims (women and children).

I wanted to start from 2009, because prior to 2009, if we are to look at our statistics (and I believe to answer that question, numbers would be the best to deal with that particular question), if we are to look at the 2008 sexual offences in Fiji, we are sitting at:

- 2008 - 264 Magistrate's Court;
- 2007 - 279; and
- 2009 - 387 (This is when we brought in the Domestic Violence Act and Policies relating to domestic violence against women and children, the first year of the Act).

Then from that year, Honourable Speaker, this coupled with a no-drop policy that the police took up, coupled with the removal of the need to corroborate evidence of rape victims in Court again in 2009.

The removal of the traditional forms of apology is stopping prosecution in these types of cases, all these policies are coming together and also the sterling work being carried out by non-government organisations in this country, to stand the spiking of violence against women and children. We saw a spike post-2009 in the rate of violence, sexual offences and rape against women. It went up to 570 in 2010 (this is in the Magistrates Court in Fiji). In 2012, it went up to 1,203, 2013 - 2,036. Again, the introduction of the Helpline for children in 2015 for domestic violence, in 2017 - all these programmes encouraged victims to report these matters which prior to these, were taken as a domestic matter to be resolved within the home, the very venue of these crimes.

From 2013, despite 2,036 if you look at the statistics in 2015 (Magistrates Court), it went down to 1,460 and 2016 - 675.

In the Magistrates Court, our statistics stops there. This was highlighted by balancing the Scales Report of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. If we are to look at the High Court, Honourable Speaker, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, I must commend them for the great statistics that they publish every month in relation to rape and sexual offences for Fiji. They do yearly summaries as well, starting from 2015 to 2018.

For May 2015 to May 2016, there were 462 rape and sexual offences. This is mostly against women and children over 90 percent of the victims. If you look at the 2017 statistics, there were 444 offences, 2018 - 378 offences. So, if we were to look at the numbers, Honourable Speaker, we can see a gradual decrease. Of course, I am not saying it is good, we want a zero statistics for these types of offences against women and children. So, if you were to look at how effective the policies and programmes are, that is all I can offer the House - what the numbers are saying in relation to indictments, in relation to statistics coming out of the Judiciary relating to rape and sexual offences against women and children?

Apart from that, Honourable Speaker, I would like to speak also about the work that the non-government organisations do in this particular area. The Fiji Women Crisis Centre, we know the great work they do, they run the Domestic Violence Helpline for Government and there is the Fiji Women's

Rights Movement where they do a lot of survey, research in this area and coming out with a Report as late as last year on balancing the scales and women's access to justice.

We have an Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Taskforce and the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Taskforce under the Ministry, chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation. It brings in all agencies that deal with domestic violence in this country to try and align the services that they provide to victims of violence when there is an event.

Also at the Ministerial level, we are looking towards a national framework on primary prevention of violence against women and girls and we are targeting to bring this out in 2020, working again with the non-government sector and the community at large. Apart from that, Honourable Speaker, the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, when we talk about domestic violence in Fiji, we are always referring to a study that they did in 2010, 2011 - "Somebody's life everybody's business."

The Fiji Women Crisis Centre will do a follow-up to that particular Report towards the end of next year, again that will give us a better picture of the landscape relating to violence against women and girls in Fiji.

Last but not least, the Ministry over the years (again this was an initiative that started under the leadership of the late Dr. Jiko Luveni), the zero-tolerance violence-free community programme. Basically, it is an awareness programme within communities for capacity-building and awareness on the topic of violence against women and girls. There is currently a review of an evaluation of that particular programme with partnership with UN Women and we are awaiting a final report on that to assess how effective this programme has been and to see if there are gaps that we could enhance to make better the effectiveness of this particular programme.

So, in a nutshell, Honourable Speaker, that is a summary of what we see as the result of policies and programmes in place, and we look forward to the 10-Year Anniversary and survey by the FWCC towards the end of next year. Thank you.

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

HON. S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Minister for that explanation with some figures. But according to what the Honourable Minister for Defence had mentioned this morning, Fiji is faced with a national problem, a national crisis in regards to violence against women and children.

Can I ask the Honourable Minister to, please, identify what could be the three main challenges you are faced with, as a Ministry, in combating this national problem? How can the Ministry work with other Ministries to be able to try and address and fast-track the effectiveness of our policies, legislations and programmes in place? Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Honourable Speaker, there are a lot of contributing factors to violence against women and children. If I were to identify one, it is the mindset - the need to change mindsets in this country.

It has to do with power relations between men and women, gender-stereotyping, comments like, 'Housewives are complaining because there is no "Boom" laundry detergent' - Those kind of comments coming from this House.

Members of Parliament are talking about giving an excuse of the killing of women and identifying certain communities as being responsible for affairs by women, implying that that could be a reason for these types of violence, gender-stereotyping, Honourable Speaker.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- A Point of order, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, Order!

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- There are a lot of Government policies in place.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- A Point of order, Honourable Speaker. My point of order is that, the Honourable Minister is raising an issue about the comments made that is actually a subject of investigation, and that should not be brought up in the House.

Under the Standing Orders, it is *sub judice* and is not to be addressed in this House. The Honourable Minister should know better as a lawyer that she should not be bringing it up in this House. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, could you repeat that as I could not hear it because of the noise.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. If the other side could just calm down.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- My point of order, Honourable Speaker, is that the Honourable Minister has alluded to allegations about Members of this House making comments, specifically about members of the community. However, Honourable Speaker, there is a subject of investigation before the Police and it is, therefore, *sub judice*, it is not admissible in this House. So she should refrain from making those comments against Members of the House, unless she names them specifically. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member for the point of order. I give the floor to the Honourable Minister.

HON. M.R. VUNIWAQA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Again, if I were to point to one factor, that would change the story in relation to violence against women and girls, it is the changing of mindsets. That needs to start from this House. It needs to start from here, because people out there, children, women listen to us. We inspire them in a good way or a bad way and in that space, the picture coming out of this House is really bad.

So, Honourable Speaker, it is not only Members of this House, the media has a role to play as well in relation to how they portray women in the media, on television, all these matters have a role to play. But what is very encouraging is that, we have great laws, policies, programmes and great partnerships with the Non-Government Organisations and the UN and development partners, in relation to eliminating violence against women and girls in Fiji. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will move on to the eighth Oral Question for today. The Honourable Viam Pillay to ask Question No. 167/2019, you have the floor, Sir.

Co-operatives - Good Business Model, Contribution to Employment-Creation
(Question No. 167/2019)

HON. V. PILLAY asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development inform Parliament why Co-operatives is a good business model and how has it contributed to employment-creation?

HON. P.D. KUMAR (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a co-operative is a self-governing and an independent association of persons, who come together to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned enterprise. The structure of the co-operatives depicts very clear, accountable and transparent operating processes. The members of co-operatives are always aware of the fact that there is a legislation under which they need to operate their co-operatives.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, co-operative models are a preferred model for our rural communities as it pulls the capital, resources, expertise, experience, knowledge and skills together.

The universal co-operative principle which guides the operations of co-operatives provide members the freedom to run their co-operatives in a democratic manner. The co-operatives are controlled by members, and not by anyone else from outside.

The co-operative model also encourages member-participation and every member of the co-operative actively participates in the affairs of the co-operative. This involvement generates interest and opens up opportunities for the members.

Furthermore, the co-operative model encourages co-operation between co-operatives and promotes sustainable development, keeping in mind the concerns of the communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, co-operatives are considered to be a good model for Fiji, as its formation and registration is simple and inexpensive. Ordinary Fijians are easily able to understand the co-operative concept.

Co-operatives can also access loans from financial institution and subsidies from the donor agencies, and the Government helps them to organise their own co-operatives.

In the last two years, the Department has registered 49 co-operatives in the Sugar Sector alone. Through these co-operatives, cane farmers have been able to access grants from the Fijian Government and acquired loans from financial institutions, such as FDB to purchase cane harvesters. It was easy for these farmers to get together and form co-operatives and be recognised as an entity to be financed. More than 800 co-operative cane farmers have benefited since.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, co-operatives have proven record of creating and sustaining employment, particularly in the rural communities. Globally, the co-operative model offers an important employment-creation opportunity.

The International Co-operative Alliance statistics shows that based on a data from 156 countries, 279.1 million people across the globe are employed in or within the scope of the co-operatives. This is around 10 percent of the world's employed population.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our nation is no exception in creating employment through co-operatives. Fijian co-operatives have created self-employment in agro-based producer co-operatives and service co-operatives.

In the last 70 years, co-operatives have created a number of livelihoods both direct and indirect. An average of 50 new direct jobs per year and in the last five years, more than 400 jobs have been directly generated. The indirect employment averages around 2,000 per year. This is mainly in the agriculture, or farmer producer and service sectors.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight some success stories in terms of our co-operatives. Normally when we talk about co-operatives, we tend to only think about agriculture sector or land. But I would like to talk about co-operatives, such as Lei Security Co-operative Limited, Suva Travel and Tour Co-operative Limited and Veivueti Taxi Co-operative Limited, who have also made huge impacts on the lives of our people by providing services to consumers and employment opportunity as security officers and drivers. Lei Security Co-operative Limited has employed some 30 people, who earn \$130 per week.

Some examples of employment-generation by co-operatives are:

- Volavanua Co-operative Limited in Vatoa Village, Lekutu, Bua, which employs five members in its logging business.
- Vulivuli Co-operative Limited in Nadi, consists of 40 members who are self-employed and do carvings to support themselves financially. These members are the main supplier to major handicraft retailers. They also supply to small handicraft shopowners.
- Lako Yani Vou Co-operative Limited, which won two Reserve Bank of Fiji Awards a week ago, engages 57 women, who sell food in Nausori Market for their livelihood;
- The Lako Yani Vou Co-operative has also opened a co-operative store in Viwa Island and employs three people on part-time basis. The ability of co-operatives to intergrade women and youths in the workforce is particularly important.
- Mataqali Naki Co-operative Limited in Navesidrua in Seaqaqa.
- Nukusolevu Co-operative Limited in Nasarowaqa, Bua, employs youth and women from the two village clans to work in the cane farm. At least, 20 people are employed to do cane planting and are paid \$500 per hectare. This is besides the wages paid for fertilizer-application, spraying and manual weeding. This project is another initiative of the Fijian Government that improves the livelihood of our grassroot communities and increases sugar production.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the co-operative is a flexible business model which contributes to the Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating poverty and creating decent work where the community itself creates that job for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for the opportunity to respond to this question.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Tuisawau, you have the floor for your supplementary question.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. A report on co-operatives identified some areas which are impediments - the lack of member-participation, untrained staff, lack of

management skills, lack of commitment from members, lack of knowledge of co-operative principles which point to, I suppose, the need for capacity-building and training.

However, looking at the budget under co-operatives, I see that this has been reduced. Most of it is on General Administration, Personal Emoluments, so \$84,000 less under Training, expenses on \$91,000 less, mostly on the Administration. My question is, given the importance indicated by the Honourable Minister and the identification of the need for capacity-building, would there be other plans to address these contradictions?

HON. SPEAKER.- It was supposed to be a supplementary question.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- It was not a question, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I just heard the comments. So, I have nothing to say.

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

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, I thank the Honourable Minister for the statement about co-operatives which I totally support. I wholeheartedly support the co-operatives movement that needs to be emphasised in the rural areas, not only resources but other base areas, groceries and other areas that is already mentioned.

But one of the problems that I find is that, you are not putting much emphasis in the budget for more co-operatives to be registered. Also, in one case, I had made an appointment in Labasa for a co-operative to be done in my village; Navakasali, Wainunu, Bua and they had an excuse about transport. It is a good thing to increase emphasis on co-operatives but we need to resource it. Can you resource it properly? Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- So, I again, I did not understand, it was just a comment, so what do you want me to say?

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Resource cooperatives: no vehicle, no transport.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Ask a question, I will reply.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Bulanauca, do you have a question that you need to ask? Make it clear.

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Honourable Speaker, our Budget is not showing emphasis on co-operatives particularly about resourcing it for transport, for them to be able to do their work. I had an example there in my village, in Navakasali, Wainunu, Bua and they could not do it.

HON. SPEAKER.- Question.

A supplementary question, you have the floor, Sir.

HON. RATU T.N. NAVURELEVU.- I commend the initiative by the Honourable Minister regarding co-operatives. Just a question: is there any initiative or plan to revive the co-operatives which has been operating wayback about 2002, for example, the Wainikoro Fishing Co-operative in Macuata?

Sir, I think the former Minister for Fisheries is already aware of that. Are there any plans to revive those kinds of co-operatives?

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

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, co-operatives was never dead that we have to revive it. It has always been there. In fact, the way the global world is going, there is a shift in how people think about enterprises and what they want to do. I will give you an example of a co-operative that was established in 2015; Drawa Block Forest Community Co-operative Limited. It is the first co-operative that started doing carbon-trading and it was supported by donor agencies like Live and Learn and EU, ADB, DFAT; they all came together and actually supported this particular co-operative.

So what I am trying to say is that, you are using one example, but there is a shift in the way enterprises are being developed and how communities think about it and what their needs are and what they can do.

In terms of resources, the resources, not necessarily that everything needs to come under co-operatives because the Ministry also delivers many other projects like for example IHRDP, NDP. There is a component on training, so we do not want to just say that under co-operatives, all the money should be shown there because we also have other projects where we can use this money for training purposes. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will move on to the first written question for today and I call on the Honourable Professor Biman Prasad to ask his Written Question No. 168/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

Written Questions

EFL Shareholders and Share Value (Question No. 168/2019)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD asked the Government, upon notice:

Would the Honourable Attorney-General, Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications provide details on the total number of EFL shareholders and share value of those:

- a) Who are eligible Fijian residents at the Record Date and applied to receive Non-Voting Shares under the offer;
- b) Who are eligible Additional Non-Voting Shareholders held by the Trustee for the benefit of future EFL consumers being Fijian citizens and residents who become customers of the Company after the record date; and
- c) Who are eligible shareholders on Non-Voting Shares that are held by the Trustee for the benefit of Eligible Fijian Residents who fail to complete and return an application by the closing date and Future EFL customers?

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Member. I give the floor to the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I will provide the answers as provided for under the Standing Orders at a later date. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- The second Written Question for today, I call on the Honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua to ask her Question No. 169/2019.

Kidney Dialysis Treatment
(Question No. 169/2019)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services, please, advise Parliament of the total number of patients by division, gender and age receiving kidney dialysis treatment from the State from the Years 2014 to-date?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Honourable Speaker, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we move on to the third Written Question for today and I give the floor to the Honourable Lynda Tabuya to ask her Question No. 170/2019. You have the floor, Madam.

Town and Country Planning - Process an Approval
(Question No. 170/2019)

HON. L.D. TABUYA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development inform Parliament on the standard charges and expected timeframe taken by Town and Country Planning to process an approval or permit for the following -

- a) Building and site plan;
- b) Land subdivision scheme; and
- c) Land rezoning scheme.

HON. P.D. KUMAR (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development).- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I will table my response at a later date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, we are not finished yet for the day. I am going to take a dinner break now for an hour. We will resume in an hour's time. We are adjourned for dinner.

The Parliament adjourned at 6.33 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 7.37 p.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please, be seated.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Motion of No Confidence in Prime Minister

Honourable Members, a motion of no confidence in the Honourable Prime Minister for the purposes of Section 94 of the Constitution was received at 4.04 p.m. this afternoon from the Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau by the Secretary-General to Parliament. Pursuant to Standing Order 49(5), the debate on such a motion is to take precedence over any other business and under Standing Order 49(1) and Section 94(2) of the Constitution must be called for a vote within 24 hours of the notice of the motion being given.

Honourable Members, accordingly, given that such motions are to take precedence over any other business, I adjourned Parliament for dinner so that this motion of no confidence could be immediately tabled and voted upon after the dinner break. After I had adjourned Parliament for dinner, the Secretary-General to Parliament brought to my notice another letter which was received at 6.57 p.m. this evening seeking to formally withdraw the motion of no confidence, which was submitted by the Honourable Member earlier this afternoon.

Honourable Members, motions of no confidence in the Prime Minister are a serious matter and for that reason the Constitution provides that they must be called and voted for without delay and within 24 hours. Such motions should not be taken lightly and the conduct of the Honourable Tuisawau in submitting this motion and then subsequently withdrawing it within a matter of hours is highly discourteous, is a gross abuse of parliamentary process and is not an appropriate use of Parliament's time.

The Parliament machinery acted with due dispatch upon receipt of the motion of no confidence, in accordance with the Constitution and the Standing Orders, in order to enable the Honourable Member to table his motion. To have withdrawn the motion of no confidence within hours of submitting it, is indeed highly improper.

Honourable Members, a motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister has grave consequences and should not be treated lightly in the willy-nilly manner that has been demonstrated by the Honourable Member. It shows a lack of respect for Parliament, its decorum, the other Members of Parliament, to the Speaker and to the Fijian people.

Unless there are any interventions from Members on this matter which I do not expect, the Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

We adjourn till tomorrow morning.

The Parliament adjourned at 7.42 p.m.