

**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**



**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**DAILY HANSARD**

**WEDNESDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER, 2019**

**[CORRECTED COPY]**

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## Oral Questions

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**WEDNESDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER, 2019**

The Parliament met at 9.32 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

**PRESENT**

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts; the Honourable Professor B.C. Prasad; the Honourable L.S. Qereqeretabua; and the Honourable Lt. Col. P. Tikoduadua.

**MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Tuesday, 3rd September, 2019 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- 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, 3rd September, 2019 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Nays')

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

Motion agreed to.

**COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

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

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. I thank you all for taking an interest in the proceedings of Parliament.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS**

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

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

1. Office of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji - Audit Report on the 2016-2017 Financial Statements of Government and 2016-2017 Agency Financial Statement of the Ministry of Economy (*Parliamentary Paper No. 127/2019*);
2. Office of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji - Audit Report on Municipal Councils 2014-2017 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 128/2019*); and
3. Office of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji - Performance Audit Report on Coordination of Actions for Elimination of Violence Against Women (*Parliamentary Paper No. 129/2019*)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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 following Reports to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts:

1. Office of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji - Audit Report on the 2016-2017 Financial Statements of Government and 2016-2017 Agency Financial Statement of the Ministry of Economy (*Parliamentary Paper No. 127/2019*);
2. Office of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji - Audit Report on Municipal Councils 2014-2017 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 128/2019*); and
3. Office of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji - Performance Audit Report on Coordination of Actions for Elimination of Violence Against Women (*Parliamentary Paper No. 129/2019*)

Honourable Members, I now call on the Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Lt. Col. Inia Seruiratu, to table his Reports, as well as those for the Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. LT. COL. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the following Reports to Parliament:

1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation - 2014 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 11/2018*); Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Annual Report 2015 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 2/2018*); Annual Report 2016-2017 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 133/2019*);
2. Fiji National University - 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 78/2019*); and
3. University of the South Pacific - 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 120/2019*).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation - 2014 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 11/2018*); Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Annual Report 2015 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 2/2018*); and Annual Report 2016-2017 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 133/2019*) to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

Under Standing Orders 38(2), I refer the Fiji National University - 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 78/2019*) and the University of the South Pacific - 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 120/2019*) to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

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

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the Fiji Commerce Commission's Annual Report 2016-2017 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 130/2019*) to Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Orders 38(2), I refer the Fiji Commerce Commission's Annual Report 2016-2017 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 130/2019*) to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

Honourable Members, you might have noticed that the Reports of the Minister for Education was tabled by the Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs. The Minister for Education is indisposed and has been indisposed for quite a few days, and I wish her a quick recovery.

## **PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

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

### Fiji Commerce Commission 2016 Annual Report - Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

HON. V. NATH.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity. The Standing Committee on Economic Affairs is pleased to report to Parliament its finding and recommendation on the Fiji Commerce Commission 2016 Annual Report.

The Fiji Commerce Commission ('Commission') is an independent statutory body that works with the objective to promote effective competition and informed markets, encourages fair trading practices as well as controls the prices of regulated industries and other markets where competition is limited.

In 2016, the Commission's Board embarked on the development of the first ever strategic plan which was finalised and adopted in 2018. It was also the year which marked the change in Executive Management where Mr. Joel Abraham was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

While deliberating on the Annual Report, it was noted that fuel price reviews are currently done on a quarterly basis and recommends more regular reviews to better manage the effects of the fluctuation of global prices to benefit the consumers. Further to this, the Committee understood the challenges of reporting breaches enforced under the Commerce Commission Act (CCA) 2010, especially in rural and isolated areas and recommends that means of communication such as toll free lines be established for whistle blowers.

The Committee would like to express its concerns on the rise of online scams locally and cautions the general public to be extremely vigilant when engaging with online traders to ensure that they do not fall victim to fraudulent activities.

Further to this, the Committee is aware of the important role FCC plays towards achieving its key Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, Goal 1 against Poverty, Goal 7 on Affordable and Clean Energy and Goal 16 on Peace and Justice, respectively. The price regulations on products that are in place, regulatory oversight with regards to importing petroleum and ensuring Fijians have access to consumer protection all reflects their commitment towards achieving the above goals respectively.

Finally, I would like to thank our Committee Members who were part of the team that produced this Report: Honourable Veena Bhatnagar (Deputy Speaker), Honourable George Vagnathan, Honourable Ro Filipe Tuisawau, Honourable Viliame Gavoka and 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 this Fiji Commerce Commission's 2016 Annual Report to the Parliament.

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

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

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

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

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

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

The Question is:

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

Does any Member oppose?

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

Motion agreed to.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now call on the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications, who has given notice to make a Ministerial Statement under Standing Order 40.

The Minister may speak for up to 20 minutes, after which 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 Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications to deliver his statement. You have the floor, Sir.

### Divestment of Energy Fiji Limited

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to provide an update on the divestment of Energy Fiji Limited (EFL).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we have alluded to on numerous occasions in Parliament that the Fijian Government has embarked on a number of reforms with our State-Owned Enterprises, including the energy sector. As part of these reforms on 23rd August, 2019, Government has divested 20 percent of the total issued shares in EFL through the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF), subject to key conditions and exemptions being satisfied.

The corporatisation of the Fiji Electricity Authority (FEA) in April 2018 was one of the milestones that enabled this transaction to materialise. FEA, which has been in existence since 1966, was corporatised into a public company limited by shares now known as Energy Fiji Limited (EFL).

As mentioned in Parliament previously, contrary to the views of various Honourable Members of Parliament on the other side, some of whom are missing, we are not in a rush to sell this strategic asset and more importantly, to any party who do not meet our conditions.

The divestment process has not been a simple one, to say the least, as there were several important regulatory changes needed to be made and other considerations to navigate in preparing the business for the divestment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the expression of interest for the partial divestment of EFL was advertised locally and internationally back in 2015 and 2016. We considered a number of approaches from various parties from around the world, ranging from Japan, Sri Lanka, China, India and Australia, as well as local entities such as FNPF, Fijian Holdings, Bank of the South Pacific and Unit Trust of Fiji.

Different bidders came in with different conditions ranging from wanting majority control, wanting management rights, veto rights, guaranteed return and equity, high tariffs and exclusivity during the due diligence period. The conditions proposed were not acceptable to the Government, given it is essential that Government retains control of Fiji's major retail electricity provider.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government could not enter into exclusive negotiations with any potential bidder, as this would not provide for competition between the bidders. Given the time taken to divest EFL, we can certainly say that this was not a desperate move to raise funds by the Government as claimed by many and reported in the dailies, like the *Fiji Times*.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we took our time in scoping the market and carefully selecting the right investor. If it was a rush sale or a desperate move, the divestment of EFL would have actually been concluded way back in 2016 or even the last few years before that. With the appointment of advisors: Squire Patton Boggs, Ernst & Young, ANZ Corporate Advisory and PricewaterhouseCoopers New Zealand, we have added value and credibility to the transaction, and a number of milestones were achieved.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the objective of modernising the energy sector and aligning it to international best practices, the Electricity Act 2017 approved by Parliament provides for the establishment of an independent regulator. It provides for the functions and duties of the independent regulator and the Minister under the Act which includes the issuing of electricity-related licences, which is in the area of bulk generation, transmission and distribution, supply and retail and their modifications, if the need arises.

On the corporatisation of FEA to EFL, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in order to implement the divestment, it was necessary for FEA to be restructured in such a manner so that shares in the businesses were capable of being issued and transferred post-corporation in April 2018. The EFL, as we all know now, was incorporated with the following shareholding capital structure:

1. Ordinary shares - 475 million shares were issued in that respect, which is 95 percent of the company; and
2. Non-voting shares - 25 million shares or 5 percent of the company, which led to a total of 500 million shares of the company that was issued.

Subsequent to the corporatisation of the EFL, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government offered non-voting shares for free or *ex gratia* share to domestic account holders of the EFL, who are Fijian citizens and who are residing in Fiji.

Moreover, these domestic customers who received the subsidy under the Electricity Subsidy Scheme will be offered a parcel of 250 shares. In other words, those households earning less than \$30,000 a year were offered 250 shares, while non-subsidised customers were offered a parcel of 150 shares. Future domestic customers of EFL will also have the opportunity to access these shares from a trustee until such time as all shares have been allotted.

The Central Share Registry Limited (CSRL) was appointed as a trustee to hold non-voting shares on behalf of eligible Fijian residents who did not return valid applications and future EFL domestic customers. The functions of the trustee include, but are not limited to, holding non-voting shares on trust for eligible Fijian residents who do not return applications under the offer and future eligible Fijian residents who are approved EFL customers. And holding accrued dividends in respect of non-voting shares held for the benefit of eligible Fijian residents who do not return applications under the offer on trust for a period to be determined.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to-date approximately 36,764 customers have so far acquired 7.1 million non-voting shares from the 25 million non-voting shares in EFL while a balance of 17 million shares are currently held in trust by CSRL. We, of course, have seen some people now interested with the purchase of shares by FNPF to now come and fill in their forms.

As part of the reform, Mr. Speaker, Sir, of the energy sector under the Electricity Act 2017, the regulator will issue licences to EFL to engage the bulk generation of electricity, the transmission and distribution of electricity and the retail supply of electricity within the main islands of Viti Levu, Vanua Levu, Ovalau, Taveuni and, of course, extending to some of the other areas where EFL will venture into. EFL will remain the sole and exclusive distributor and retailer of electricity on the main islands.



The generation of electricity will be part of EFL function but not exclusive, as we want to promote competition in the generation segment of energy and the development of renewable energy by Independent Power Producers (IPP) to reduce the dependency on imported fuel and to work towards the Government's goal of providing at least, 90 percent of Fiji's energy requirements to renewable sources by 2030 and achieving 100 percent of power generation through renewable energy by 2036.

The IPP will negotiate the price with EFL, depending on their technology and source of energy, that is, solar, hydro, wind and, of course, now in some places of the world you have got wave energy that will be used to generate electricity which will then be sold back to EFL through the EFL grid.

Existing and new IPPs will need to be granted generation licences by FCCC to operate in order for them to get into this segment. There are a number of existing IPPs. We have signed power purchase agreement with EFL, such as FCCC, Nabou Green Energy Limited, Fiji Sugar Corporation, as I mentioned, but there remains a number of immense untapped opportunity of, at least, \$500 million in the renewable energy's phase. The draft licences are in near final form with FCCC and FNPF, and their advisors were also consulted in the drafting of the licences.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, PwC New Zealand undertook the financial due diligence of EFL, whilst Squire Patton Boggs conducted the legal due diligence. The due diligence reports were made available through a data room in order to provide comfort to the bidders and to allow them to have a clear view of the EFL business.

Again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, going back to the various comments made by Honourable Members of Parliament in particular, those on the other side and in particular, some of them who are missing from here, FNPF is not a cash cow for Government as they have their own advisors appointed to assist them in this transaction. Ashurst and Binder, Dijker and Otte (BDO) from Australia were their key advisors, and I can tell you negotiations were extremely tough.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, the irresponsible comments by Honourable Professor Prasad (unfortunately who is not here), is undermining the credibility of the FNPF Board and the management, and indeed the institution itself, as the FNPF advisors and the efforts that were put in by both parties to conclude the deal was way above board and indeed, the most transparent.

The FNPF was shortlisted as a preferred bidder for this transaction based on its continuing interest, meeting Government's preference for an investor to acquire a minority stake in EFL, and an agreement that control be retained by Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, FNPF is a major investor in Fiji and owns the majority of shares in Amalgamated Telecom Holdings (ATH), Home Finance Company (HFC) Bank and fully owns the Natadola Bay Resort Limited, which is the InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa, Holiday Inn in Suva, Momi Bay Resort and the Grand Pacific Hotel. The FNPF also has 49 percent direct ownership in Vodafone Fiji Limited and, of course, Mr. Speaker, Sir, FNPF many claim is one of the largest real estate holders in Fiji.

This investment by FNPF means that we can now harness the expertise, innovation and efficiency of the private sector in new ways, giving the Fijian people a competitive and customer-focused energy provider that is fully capable of meeting Fiji's growing need for clean and renewable energy. Accordingly, all assets, liabilities, staff, customers and contract agreements that were held by EFL will continue to be held by EFL.

We are also pleased to inform, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there will be no job losses or anyone made worse off after the acquisition by FNPF. All staff who are employed by EFL, will continue to be employed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government delivers on its promises and continues to look after Fijians at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, if you take a step back and look at everything we have done for all Fijians - free education, free bus fares, free water, free shares in EFL through EFL domestic account holders, free access to legal services through the Legal Aid Commission and the Micro and Small Business Grants (MSBG), grants for entrepreneurs across the country, et cetera.

As part of the deal, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the same vein, Government will continue with the Electricity Subsidy Scheme and Rural Electrification Projects, as we remain committed to bringing every Fijian access to reliable power by 2021.

We remain committed to supplying 99 percent of energy in Fiji from renewable energy sources by 2036, and we remain committed to maintaining EFL's role as a job creator in our economy with staffing needs expected to expand in the year ahead, as EFL continues the growth of its asset portfolio.

There is a budgetary allocation in the 2019-2020 National Budget amounting to \$4 million for the Electricity Subsidy Programme and \$17.9 million for Rural Electrification Projects.

Another key feature of the deed of the divestment, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that EFL will continue with the non-commercial obligations up to \$22 million based on the 2018 Financial Statements and the excess to this amount will be paid by the Fiji Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this means that we can all be proud that ordinary Fijians will continue to benefit from this divestments, on top of all the other programmes and funding, this Government is providing under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister to support Fijian families.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Fijian families will also see the biggest returns as EFL profits grow. Also, not forgetting the members of FNPF who will also now benefit as more returns the FNPF receives from the investment in EFL, the returns will go down to their respective accounts. In other words, if you are a domestic account holder, you have been given 250 shares free by Government, then on the other hand, you have also become a shareholder through FNPF, holding shares in the EFL.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, just like any merger and acquisition transaction, investors will be bidding on the future operations, cash flows and projections of the business. These are also the variables used in valuing a business by applying the discount cash flow method. When looking at comparable transactions and overseas markets with minority interest at stake, they were settled between 7.1 to 9.1 times the entity's Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation, Amortization (EBITDA) value which was used as the basis to determine the settlement price of \$220 million or 20 percent of the equity interest in EFL, which is being divested to FNPF.

The completion of the transaction, including the finalisation of the exact buying price will take place following the satisfaction of certain pre-conditions that have been agreed upon by the Government, the FNPF and EFL. Some of the conditions include the implementation of the Electricity Act 2017, Government's commitment to continue with the non-commercial obligation in excess of \$22 million and potential electricity tariff changes.

As we are all aware, Mr. Speaker, Sir, EFL had made a submission to the Fiji Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC), requesting adjustments to the current tariff rates. In Fiji, we have a uniform current average tariff rate of 37.34 cents per kilowatt, which is one of the lowest in the region.

Any proposed changes to the current tariff scheme cannot be pre-empted as the process is independent of the Government, FNPF and EFL. We understand that FCCC will soon be making an announcement in relation to the tariff review undertaken.

Further to the wide, extensive public consultations undertaken by FCCC, we expect that some key factors that need to be considered by FCCC, despite of the Electricity Act 2017 in determining tariffs are:

1. Cost of production of electricity which is generation cost, transmission, distribution cost, retail cost, labour cost, repair and maintenance, loan repayments, et cetera.
2. Depreciation;
3. Future capital investments;
4. Regulated asset base (assets used to generate and supply electricity); and
5. Return on capital or weighted average cost of capital.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as long as FNPF holds more than 15 percent of shares in EFL, they will be allowed to appoint a Director on the EFL Board to represent them. EFL will surely benefit and further enhance its strong corporate governance position. A dividend policy will operate for three years, having a dividend payout ranging from 30 percent to 50 percent of EFL's audited net profit after tax.

Keeping the next phase of the divestment process in mind, the Government is free to sell any of its ordinary shares in EFL to a third party and may also market the portion of shares required by FNPF in EFL to the third party at any time. This is referred to as the Government's 'drag-along right'.

Government has retained a right to compel or drag FNPF to sell either part of the shares it holds, such that FNPF will continue to hold 15 percent of the ordinary shares by EFL or its entire shareholding.

Accordingly, the Government has maintained flexibility in relation to a future divestment that occurs in the next two years. Government has granted a good option to FNPF for a period of two years, which allows FNPF the right to require the Government to buyback part of the FNPF's shareholding.

Once the Electricity Act 2017 commences, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the FCCC will be appointed as the independent regulator of the energy sector, and their regulatory functions will be absorbed by the FCCC.

In addition, as part of the deregulation, FCCC as a regulator will undertake the following regulatory functions:

1. Enforcing and administering the Electricity Act 2017;
2. Granting and administering all licences in relation to the electricity industry in Fiji;
3. Setting and enforcing standards for the electricity industry in Fiji;
4. Setting electricity tariff rates; and
5. Safeguarding interest of consumers in the electricity sector in Fiji.

It is expected that some regulatory functions will be performed by EFL during a transitional period of, at least, six months until such time as the FCCC is fully resourced to take up these responsibilities. Functions relating to tariff setting, dispute resolution and issuing of electricity licences will be performed by FCCC as soon as the Electricity Act comes into effect. This would modernise the energy sector of Fiji and make it more attractive for investors and independent power producers.

On the next stage of the divestment process, Mr. Speaker, Sir, once the formalities in the sale of shares in EFL to FNPF is completed by October, 2019, Government will continue pursuing a further divestment of 24 percent of the total issued shares in EFL, which will bring the total private sector investment to 44 percent.

In identifying a suitable and strategic investor to meet Fiji's energy needs into the future, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government is mindful that future investors in EFL need to be credible, technically competent and financially sound.

Given that the EFL is a strategic utility provider, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are in no rush to actually divest its shares. We will treat this process with the caution it deserves, and we will not hasten to divest, until we find partners that are absolutely certain are the right fit and who can help realise our nation's energy needs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at this juncture, I would like to say that we can be fully proud of the recent achievements in our energy sector, and all members of the FNPF can be rest-assured that FNPF is investing responsibly in a billion dollar company with a proven track record. Indeed, we have already had companies like Fijian Holdings, who we are already having some discussions on the site who were very keen to participate in this divestment process, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, through this new partnership, we will remain the majority shareholder in EFL, and our agenda in energising the lives of the Fijian people remains as ambitious than ever.

As highlighted also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are looking at listing EFL on the stock market, and very soon the Fijian shareholders who have been given *ex gratia* shares will be able to then participate through the stock market and be able to sell and buy shares and, of course, we will get more ordinary Fijians participating in the growth of the capital markets in Fiji.

Our growing economy will, of course, Mr. Speaker, Sir, continue to serve with the engine power and the growing access to clean and affordable energy, a major part of our ambition that we have stated in the NDCs, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and, of course, EFL will now become a major partner in respect of this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications for his statement.

I now give the floor to the designate of the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Aseri Radrodro. You have the floor, Sir.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. First of all, I would like to make a commentary regarding this Ministerial Statement. I think the Honourable Minister seems to pre-empt the question that is listed today on Question No. 216/2019, and I hope that that question is not withdrawn once it is time to be asked in this Honourable House, Honourable Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with all that had been mentioned by the Honourable Minister and the timing that he had alluded to, the important thing is, it brings in a lot of questions to be asked regarding the divestment that he has alluded to and whether a proper due diligence has been carried out in this process, especially when this same asset was listed to be sold out in 2016 - to be divested for over \$500 million. Again, in this year's Budget, it was again listed but at a lesser amount of only \$80 million or \$90 million.

Now, as has been alluded to by the Honourable Minister, the divestment goes to \$220 million. So, it brings into question whether proper due diligence was carried out by FNPF and most importantly, we have not heard how much will the return on investment by FNPF be for us, the members of FNPF - no specific amount or no specific rate over the three-year dividend period that he has alluded to. It is a worry, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to say that it might indicate what we have stated all along, whether the Government has any money to finance its operations, especially with this kind of dealings within the FNPF.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to remind the Honourable Members of this House what I have stated all along in the previous Parliament Sitting about allocations to resource owners. In the Ministerial Statement that he has just made, there is nothing at all, no specific mention made on the allocation to resource owners - the landowners in Monasavu, the landowners in the Monasavu Dam and landowners in the Nadarivatu Dam, no specific mention of the allocations given to them. The question is, why is that?

They have given their land for a specific purpose - for the nation. Now, their land has been transferred to EFL, a commercial entity. What has the resource owners gained out of this commercial operation, in this commercial venture, in this share divestment, Mr. Speaker, Sir? And this is something that we will continue to highlight in this House and we will continue to remind the Government on why the landowners and resource owners who have given their land and resources for a specific purpose - for Government use. Not only the Dam owners, we would also like to include those who have had their land where they have put in the grid; electricity posts. Now, that EFL has been corporatised, privatised ...

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Not being privatised, do you know the meaning of privatisation or not?

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON A.M. RADRODRO.- ... the poles in the respective resource areas, EFL seeks no consent on the accessibility to those areas. So the question is, "What is EFL giving to these resource owners, Mr. Speaker, Sir?"

Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, it is giving them peanuts. It is giving them nothing. There is a lot of issues involved in terms of the ownership of the Wailoa Power Station. The landowning units are still insisting today about the leasing compensation for the Wailoa Power Station.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we note that previously you have also mentioned that EFL has been giving 60 cents per kilowatt hour for both, the Monasavu and Nadarivatu resource owners. The question is, why is this piece of arrangement or piece of allocation of 60 cents per kilowatt hour not included in the Fair Share Royalty Act that has been passed by Government in the last Parliament sitting. So, we request that Government also includes this in the Fair Share Royalty Act, Mr. Speaker.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of the \$52.2 million that has been a bone of contention by land resource owners, at the moment, they would like to seek Government intervention to see that this payment of \$52.2 million is trickled down to them.

At the moment, whereabouts or where has this money been given to, Mr. Speaker, Sir?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, you have had your five minutes.

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

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

We will move on. Honourable Members, I have been advised that there are no Bills for consideration.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

Honourable Members, you know when the Speaker is addressing the House, do not interrupt!

We will move on to the first Oral Question for today, and I give the floor to the Honourable Anare Jale to ask Question No. 211/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

## QUESTIONS

### Oral Questions

#### Delivery of Medical Services - Locum Arrangement (Question No. 211/2019)

HON. A. JALE asked the Government, upon notice

Can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services update Parliament on the effectiveness of 'Locum' arrangements (where doctors in the Civil Service stand in or relieve private medical practitioners and vice-versa) for the delivery of medical services?

HON. DR. I WAQAINABETE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Honourable Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Before I answer, I just want to bring to your attention something that the Honourable Prime Minister also asked me just to bring to the attention of this august House and also the nation as a whole.

There is a measles outbreak that is happening in Auckland and Honourable Speaker, in the last Parliamentary Sitting or before that, I had discussed about measles. The measles outbreak is happening in Auckland. In dailies today, in the *Fiji Sun*, the Honourable Prime Minister in New Zealand is talking about the measles outbreak that is happening in Wellington and in Auckland.

It is happening prevalently amongst the New Zealanders but obviously, some of the Polynesian children, including children from all around the Pacific or who are of Pacific origin are being affected.

Honourable Speaker, I want to reassure this House that Fiji, because of the high immunisation rate that we have, we have what is called, 'herd immunity' because we have an immunisation rate, that is about 95 percent.

The issues with the First World Countries where measles is breaking out, including America, is the fact that some parents have not been able to agree to have their children immunised. We are very fortunate that Fijian parents have chosen the right thing to do and to allow their children to have vaccination.

The vulnerable at the moment remains those below 1 year old, because the first vaccination begins at 1 year old, and also the very, very old, and so our travel advisory is for anyone travelling to New

Zealand, and if they think they have not had a measles vaccination, then they should present themselves to any nearest Health Centre or health facility and have an immunisation before they go to New Zealand.

We are also looking at our people who are coming back from New Zealand and actually asking them relevant questions in regards to this.

If I may go back to the question that is before me, Honourable Speaker, there is about 800 doctors working across the Fiji Ministry of Health and Medical Services. At the moment, these doctors are supplemented by 39 locums who are doctors, general practitioners and social specialists from the private sector, providing support back into the public service.

Interestingly, Honourable Speaker, most of these locums are Fijians and doctors who have worked initially within the Civil Service or within the Ministry of Health, so they completely understand the workings of the Ministry of Health, the limitations that they may face at times and also the protocols that are in place.

Locums are helping the Minister to deliver on its goal of offering prompt access to quality healthcare because they are providing support during the busiest periods, and the busiest periods maybe in the morning, Honourable Speaker, or in the afternoon.

Since October 2016, we have had this programme in place and also in that year, we revised the rates for the locum appointments. Based on the current arrangements, the general practitioners are paid at a rate of \$50 per hour, irrespective of how many patients they see, and specialists are paid at \$80 an hour with a cap or maximum of 20 hours per week. These rates have proved effective in providing an incentive for general practitioners and specialists in the private sector to come back and support us within the Ministry of Health.

The current programme has been there before 2016 but obviously, with the revised rates, has led to shorter waiting times and greater patient satisfaction, Honourable Speaker.

There are also benefits for our doctors, whose workloads have become more manageable. And our private sector doctors bring with them that private sector mannerisms in which they come and also encourage doctors within the Ministry of Health to be able to improve their professionalism around that area.

Since 2016, the locums have been able to support:

- CWM Hospital;
- Lautoka Hospital;
- Labasa Hospital;
- Makoi Health Centre;
- Samabula Health Centre;
- Lami Health Centre;
- Raiwaqa Health Centre;
- Valelevu Health Centre;
- Tamavua Twomey;
- St. Giles Hospital; and
- Nadi Hospital.

Valelevu has five general practitioners, who after was provided locum and they help support more than the 10 doctors that are already there.

Locum doctors, Honourable Speaker, also engage in delivering services in the Specialist Departments of:

- Accident and Emergency;
- Paediatric Unit;
- Anaesthesia;
- Internal Medicine;
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology;
- Eye Unit; and
- Dermatology.

For quite a while until about two years ago, Dr. Bakani was the locum Cardiologist at the CWM Hospital.

The applications for locums are made through the Subdivision Hospital or the medical superintendent of the big hospital and locums are only appointed when a clear need is identified. So the need is actually identified by the Divisional Heads on the ground.

On a broader perspective, locum appointments also promote opportunities for advanced learning, information-sharing and broaden networking between the doctors in the hospital and the doctors in the private sector. To-date, the Ministry of Health has spent \$6 million on locum and in the 2019-2020 Financial Year, we have set aside \$2.5 million for locum appointments.

Locum appointments are a short-term solution and the long-term strategic plan is to keep on recruiting experienced doctors from overseas, from the Fijian diaspora, when we see the need to, to address shortages and also the new graduates that are coming in, and we hope to employ another 110 graduates in January next year. We are moving in the right direction by taking steps to broaden partnerships, both locally and internationally.

Honourable Speaker, I also have much pleasure in relaying that there are 18 medical officers or specialists from the Ministry of Health, who are also locums into the private sector, into the private clinics. This practice must be approved by the Permanent Secretary, and to ensure that there is clear demonstration of no conflict of interest, there is professional indemnity covered and no impact on the Ministry's service. A number of our doctors are gaining significant extra mentoring and experience from these arrangements, while also providing private sector practice to grow and thrive.

Honourable Speaker, also in terms of shortages around the Pacific, our specialists have taken their leave or gone on leave without pay, and provide a locum in providing specialist services around the Pacific.

Honourable Speaker, the Ministry will continue with the locum arrangement to address the increase in patient numbers at our health facilities, and these are especially around the density populated areas.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services staff regard patient health as paramount and continue to work with the major Hospitals, Subdivisional Hospitals and Health Centres to identify areas where locum appointments are needed, and we hope that with the strategic plans in place that we will reach a time when we will not need to have as much locums as we have at the moment.

I thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Dr. Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu, you have the floor for your supplementary question.



HON. DR. RATU A. R. LALABALAVU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, first of all, I want to thank the Honourable Minister for reassuring the nation with regards to our prevention against measles. With regards to facilitating the arrangements, does the Government engage with individual General Practitioners (GPs) or through the Fiji College of General Practitioners and likewise, vice-versa, the medical officers or Ministry of Health? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for that question. The need for a locum in a specific area in the Subdivision or in a Health Centre is identified by the Medical Officer-in-Charge. So, the Senior Medical Officer or the Consultant, for example, in a particular Unit indicates because of maybe shortages or maybe an officer is going on leave, that they will need backfilling in terms of a locum. So, that identification begins the whole process of them vetting for a locum.

As I have alluded to in the answer to the original question, then that indication goes through to the Permanent Secretary's Office, the GP is then identified, we may include an expression of interest and appropriate checks are done, including the Fiji Medical Council and then finally, a locum contract is in place.

For a Ministry of Health employee or Government employee (doctor) to go and provide locum outside, that need is identified by the facility owner, for example, the general practitioner may indicate that he or she may want to go on leave for a few weeks and need a locum to provide that backfilling or cover. That request is also put through to the Ministry of Health. They may have identified a particular person and due diligence is made from our part to ensure that that locum is not actually impacting on the service that we provide. There is indemnification for the officer that is going to provide that locum and there is a specific period in which that locum will be provided.

The other thing that we have done, Honourable Speaker, is that currently, we have a one-year contract in place because before, it was a locum contract that was signed and it went on and went on for a few years, and things have changed as the years go on. So, we make it on a yearly basis. Thank you.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Locum is good, but at the same time, the Honourable Minister has removed the free meals for doctors and nurses for our emergencies, Doctors locum or otherwise. So, can the Honourable Minister explain why has he removed those free meals during their on-call periods?

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Honourable Speaker, we talked about this question from the Honourable Member in the last Sitting. I have explained it then that this is a decision made by the Permanent Secretary in regards to the General Orders that are in place since 2011.

The General Orders have particular rules, for example, officers who work 36 hours a week, irrespective of the shifts are requested that they should bring their own meals. Those who will have to work beyond will then be able to request for meal.

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjected)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

Honourable Member, you asked a question, he is providing the answer, so you should listen.

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Honourable Speaker, that is no different from many other institutions, companies and businesses around. If they work normal shift, they would bring their own meal and if they have to work beyond it, then obviously arrangements will be made.

There are circumstances, for example, that a nurse might have to pull through, that nurse will be entitled to a meal. There are circumstances, for example, where we have live-in staff, where doctors and nurses live-in in an institutions, they will be provided meals. There are doctors and nurses, as we speak, who are provided meals. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, my supplementary question is not on locum but on the statement that he made before he answered the substantive question, Sir. It is about the measles outbreak in Auckland, whether he will be making a statement to the nation.

On 10th August (last month), there was an advisory given and we all remember the very sad incident of 1875, when our chiefs came back from Australia, one of them, the highest chief on that trip, and my apology, Mr. Speaker, Sir, was infected.

Will there be a statement to assure the nation, particularly those who have relatives in Auckland and those who may be traveling to Auckland, including our fruit pickers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Honourable Speaker, I thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for that supplementary question.

The measles epidemic in the late 1800s, 40,000 of our people then passed on. It was thought to be about 25 percent of the population. There were two doctors who were working at that time and those two doctors did not have meals, did not have locums and did not have overtime, but they looked after the whole of the nation, including the support of ship doctors who arrived into the country.

It was the workings of these two doctors that began the rudimentary rules in place that finally came together in the 1932 Public Health Act, that we now have in place. It was also the workings of these doctors, plus the support of the native medical practitioners who worked with them that also begun the Fiji School of Medicine in 1885. Since then, during and after Independence, the Colonial Government put it upon themselves that we will never have this episode again of measles.

In 1983 was when we introduced measles as a vaccination within the Ministry of Health. There are two vaccinations that we have, and they are part and parcel of the many vaccinations that the Government provides for free.

The last epidemic was in early 2000 of measles but todate, we have had no Fijian have measles. The reason is because of what is called 'herd immunity'. When 95 percent of those vulnerable have immunisation, the other 4 percent are covered because they are hidden within that group. That is what is called 'herd immunity'. In Fiji at the moment, we believe touch wood have not had a measles epidemic because of that herd immunity that we have in place.

Honourable Speaker, the challenges as I have alluded to earlier, in the areas in the First World Countries, is a challenge because children or parents have decided not to have a measles vaccination, and therefore, those cohort of children and adults are where the measles have come in.

We have had over the last month or so, an advisory where we thought that a particular person had signs and symptoms of measles came through into the country. Due diligence was made in terms of identifying the person, the contacts, they had come for a family function. The public health protection officers were able to find the contacts, talked to them but because of the herd immunity, they are protected.

The vulnerable at the moment, Honourable Speaker, is the very young, below one year old, and the very old, who may not have had the vaccination in 1983. Therefore, the request is for any Fijian travelling out of the country to New Zealand or to any other First World Country, and if they think they have not had a measles vaccination, to present themselves to any health facility and receive measles vaccination. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, we will now suspend proceedings for refreshments in the Big Committee Room and we will resume in half an hour. We adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.31 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.02 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will continue with the Agenda Item and for the second Oral Question for today, I give the floor to the Honourable Vijay Nath to ask Question No. 212/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

Update - Global Economy Developments  
(Question No. 212/2019)

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

Can the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications provide an update on recent developments in the global economy, its implications on Fiji's major trading partner and possible impact on Fiji?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for this question. Indeed, this is a very important question for all of us as Members of Parliament, to be aware of what is happening outside Fiji, in particular the overall economic situation globally.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as highlighted in the Budget, we had warned of an impending slowdown in the global economy in 2019, after the years, of course, of strong growth. At that time last year, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had projected global growth at 3.3 percent for 2019, down from 3.6 percent the year before.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the outlook has not improved since then. It has, in fact, deteriorated even further. Instead of a global slowdown, it appears that we may actually be on the verge of a global recession.

If I could elaborate, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in July, the IMF reduced its 2019 global growth forecast further from 3.3 percent to 3.2 percent, the lowest mark since the onset of a global financial crisis. And as has already been highlighted that most of the growth in any case is coming from the emerging economies.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a number of combination of ongoing and emerging obstacles in the roots of the looming recession. These include, of course, the much publicised China-United States trade war, growth slowdown in the US, increasing trade tensions between the US and the European Union now, Brexit concerns, staggering corporate debt in China, rising oil prices given the uncertainty in the Middle East, turmoil in global financial markets and greater uncertainty in a number of emerging and advanced economies also, as we have seen, including most of our major trading partners.

Just very quickly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because obviously it is a very extensive subject, I do not want to talk on for too long, the US, it seems, Mr. Speaker, Sir, has placed additional tariffs on Chinese imports of intermediate and finished goods. Currently, the total value of US tariffs applied to Chinese goods is US\$550 billion. Although these tariffs are not expected to have a lasting impact on China, they do, however, present a major challenge for global supply chains.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, China has responded by raising tariffs on imports from the US, while cutting tariffs on imports from other countries. The average tariff on US imports is now 20.7 percent, while the average tariff on imports from elsewhere is 6.7 percent. So, you can see that the non-US countries are being given preference by the Chinese Government, meaning that American goods are not as competitive

in the Chinese market as they used to be. Currently, the total value of Chinese tariffs applied to US goods is US\$185 billion.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, just very quickly with the US economy, the trade tensions and the very heavy-handed protectionism that have arisen because of these political decisions being made, has prompted businesses to adopt a wait-and-see approach, with the investment activity contracting by 0.6 percent in June in the first three months.

The housing market has also been affected, declining for six consecutive quarters up till June. Obviously, the trade war has had a huge negative impact, not just in terms of the actual runs on the board on the ground but in terms of the psychology of it all.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the most telling determinants of whether a country is doing well, whether it has confidence in the economy, is what we call, looking at the yield curve in the bond market. For example, the yield curve shows the spread between the yields for long-term and short-term Government bonds or treasury bills.

Generally, the yield on the short-term bond is lower than the yield on the long-term bond, so when you have a lower, sort of, bond, a 10-year bond, the yield curve will actually go up in that way. When you have a short-term bond, the yield curve will be much smaller. From that, what it means is that, short-term bonds are lower yield because long-term bonds are viewed as safe. You can invest on a long-term basis, you tie up your money for a long term.

If, however, investors fear that a recession is near, they will move away from more risky, volatile assets, such as stocks and short-term bonds towards long-term bonds. This high demand for long-term bonds will drive up the prices and push down the yields. Eventually, the yields are pushed down so far that when you see the bond curve actually will invert, in other words, it starts dropping off in that manner.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, what we see now is that, the inverted yield curves are beginning to happen in the long-term bonds in the US market. Generally, when it starts inverting, that is a general indication that a recession is about to set in. And that has always been the trend since 1950 which is the most reliable indicator of a looming crisis.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, Sir, you have seen the sentiment in the global financial market activities, you can see it in US, Europe, China, Hong Kong, Japan and the rest of Asia following lately. Even in Australia, in two days, they lost in excess of AU\$80 billion in the stock market.

The Chinese economy, Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, very quickly, grew by a record low of 6.2 percent in the second quarter of 2019, while annual growth slowed down with 6.6 percent. Normally, the Chinese economy grows at a much faster rate than that. The downturn, of course, is partly because of the ongoing trade war and partly due to recent stimulus measures by the Chinese Government, to boost domestic demands, such as reducing lending rates, cutting taxes and increasing infrastructure spending.

However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, these fiscal measures and, indeed, monetary measures have not had the desired impact. There is corporate debt growth now of 155 percent of GDP in June 2019 in the Chinese market, and a greater risk of corporate debt defaults.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is another trade war looming or brewing between US and its long term ally, the EU. As part of its 'America First Protectionist Policy', the US in 2018 placed tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from a number of countries, including several members of the EU to protect its national interest, as they say.

In response, the EU placed duties on the US imports, such as motorcycles and bourbon. The US is considering further tariffs on European goods, including cherries and whiskey, and has also threatened tariffs on luxury items, such as German cars and French wines.

The German economy, Mr. Speaker, Sir, contracted by 0.1 percent in the second quarter of 2019, and its central bank now predicts a further decline in the third quarter.

The UK, of course, Mr. Speaker, Sir, very quickly, we know that they are continuing brochures regarding Brexit. Now, of course, we have seen that the Prime Minister of UK has suspended Parliament. There is a whole lot of tension around that whether, in fact, he has the legal authority to suspend Parliament and now, of course, the deadlock remains over a 'no-deal' Brexit or a 'deal with' Brexit and, again, there is a huge impact on the movement of finances and, indeed, corporates in that area.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other countries, of course, are feeling it. Recession in New Zealand is starting to hit closer to home and, again, there is a sluggish in the housing and construction activity, so weak growth, low household spending too.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Australia, as I mentioned, of course, the economy has been very lethargic. There is a lot of predictions about them, sort of, going into a negative growth which they have not experienced for a very long period of time. There is a lot of speculation because of many of these political decisions that had been made and, of course, as we have already seen, the world economy always has what we call, a spike, and it does slow down. The issue here is how much of the slowdown will it actually fall into, and that is what we need to understand.

What are the implications for Fiji? As I had mentioned earlier on, Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the advantages of Fiji not necessarily being so deeply immersed or part of the global economy is that, you can have certain buffers. However, of course, it can have an impact on us, and one of those things is, for example, if the Australian and New Zealand economies do slow down significantly, it can have an impact on our tourism sector, given that Australia and New Zealand account for more than 60 percent of our tourism arrivals.

Of course, the Australian dollar has also hit its lowest since 2009. So if the Australian dollar falls and the Fijian dollar remains at the same value, then Fijian products or coming into Fiji does become a bit more expensive. Therefore, then people will start considering, do we actually come to Fiji or not? It will mean that we need to take certain measures, the hospitality industry and the tourism sector need to take various measures to be able to mitigate against those types of risks.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, of course, we have had a number of measures that we have put in place. Some fiscal measures as we announced that we, for example, have reduced duty and, indeed, given tax incentives for people to build warehouses, we have put incentives in respect of people to get into the housing sector, very attractive incentive rates. Only two days ago. I was talking to some business people and I am told there is about eight different applications for people to build warehouses. What does this means? It means that they will be importing material, and when they import material they pay VAT, it increases revenue collection. It also means that it creates jobs so we need to keep the economy buoyant from that perspective, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Of course, we are in a good position as highlighted yesterday, that our liquidity remains buoyant also. It has doubled since the end of last year, so in other words, there is enough cash there for growth if people do want to invest.

What we do want to say, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that, all of us need to be aware of what is happening globally. We need to be aware of some of the ramifications of what is happening globally. At the same

time, we also need to be positive as to how we can, as a local economy, be able to domestically take advantage of the fact that we are not completely immersed in the global chain.

However, we can be impacted by them but we can also have many positive growth. So we need to, for example, strengthen further our trade ties within the Pacific Region itself. We need to be a lot more smarter in terms of how we do marketing in the tourism sector and we need to further incentivise local businesses to be able to invest within Fiji itself to keep the growth rates up, to keep the job markets buoyant, and to be able to ride this particular wave which hopefully, we will be able to ride for the next two years or so because generally, these types of trade war barring, God forbid, anything dramatic happens globally between China, USA and in the Middle East, that we should be able to ride out this period. Thank you, 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.

Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Minister has highlighted the likelihood of corporate debt default globally. Can the Government identify those corporate bodies in Fiji or sectors of the industry that are in distress, that may lead to corporate debt default?

I say this, Honourable Speaker, because in the latest Reserve Bank of Fiji (RBF) Report, it says that the registration of second-hand cars and new cars has fallen this year. There are huge stocks of cars wherever you go in Fiji. Those could be dead stocks that are financed by the banks and they could lead to default. Can the Government indicate to us those industries or corporate organisations that are likely to be in distress and creating corporate debt default?

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member is misquoting me. Let me read out what I actually read out.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have said that the unsustainable corporate debt growth in China grew by 155 percent of GDP in 2018. It was specifically about the corporate debt growth in China, not globally *per se*. But, of course, there could be, I am not sure about that, but I talked specifically about China.

In respect to Fiji, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not think the number of cars in the yard of second-hand car dealers is generally an indication of the fact that they will be corporate defaults. I mean, these are commercial arrangements that are made between the banks and those individual companies that are borrowing from them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have seen car stocks in yards vary from time to time. It has not been that significant in terms of the growth of the stocks sitting in the yards itself. We saw a few years ago in anticipation of the reviews in the tariffs, a lot of the car dealers, in fact, had brought in or bought in a lot of cars into Fiji, took them a while to get rid of them. Some of them were able to sell very quickly, but I do not think that that is necessarily an indicator of the corporate debt situation in Fiji, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I worry about the Government selling off its assets and it has done that for EFL, Ports Fiji, and others. Does the Honourable

Minister anticipate that the Government will sell even more of its assets to cushion the effects of this possible crisis?

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, no. In fact the Government announced its divestment policy a few years back and we already have a programme working with organisations, like ADB and the World Bank, not in terms of anticipation or anticipatory measures taken in response to any type of global recession but, in fact, to be able to ensure that we get a lot more efficiency and efficacy within the State-Owned Enterprises, and we are doing it, of course, selectively as we already announced in Parliament some time back that we do have a policy in place.

So, looking at strategic assets that we may need to be able to divest shares to bring private sector participation, or assets where Government should actually not be in that space altogether. So, no, there is no correlation between the policy that was announced prior to the decision of Government divesting its shares strategically and the recession itself. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. RO. F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. My question is on what the Honourable Minister mentioned on the overall global economy, especially that we have been giving a rosy picture for the last few years. In terms of the Budget, there has been under-estimation and, in fact, we could say, is misleading.

The other trends we have noted in the performance of the key sectors on cane production, sugar, non-sugar agriculture as against GDP, world production, tourism not according to the targets, timber, fish production; all these point to something which is not really what is being printed. The question is related to the increasing cost of fuel, et cetera. What is the Government doing to cushion the impact on cost of living, the increasing prices which the public right now is concerned about and some of these price increases are unmanageable by the public? What is the Government doing, apart from decreasing their salaries?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, I will remind you again, do not make a statement before you ask your supplementary question. The supplementary questions are pretty clear, should be related to what has taken place before. It should be short, sharp.

Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, I think, the Honourable Member actually misled Parliament when he has actually said that we have decreased salaries. In fact, it is to the contrary, the Government has increased salaries for civil servants, some of them up to 80 percent. He actually does not know what is happening around him.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I can be given time to list all the following measures that Government has put in place to buffer low income earners from living costs:

1. We have reduced VAT from 15 percent to 9 percent.



2. Personal Income Tax - the income tax threshold was increased from \$8,600 to \$16,000 and now to \$30,000. So no one earning less than \$30,000 pays a single cent of tax.
3. Corporate Tax rate was reduced from 33 percent to 20 percent.
4. We now have completely free education, so a low income person has absolutely nothing to take out of their pocket to send their children to school.
5. We also now have a programme where if they want to send their children to university, they can get a scholarship based on merit. They can also get a tertiary education loan.
6. If you have a low income family, we subsidise their tariff rates up to 50 percent, irrespective of what the tariff rate is.
7. If you come from a low income family earning less than \$30,000, you actually get 90,000 litres of free water here on annual basis.
8. On top of that, we have subsidised bus fares and we have free text books.
9. Again, on top of that, we provide disability allowance that was never provided in Fiji before.
10. We provide social pension for those pensioners who never had FNPF before.
11. We provide for newborn babies that are born to low income families where they get \$1,000.
12. We provide food voucher programme for rural pregnant women.
13. We have now increased the Social Welfare payments to what it was.
14. On top of that, we now have housing assistance for low income families. We actually provide up to \$15,000 a year, contributing towards them being able to purchase their homes.
15. We now also have the development for iTaukei landowners, who are considered to be asset rich but cash poor. We are actually helping them to develop their land.

Mr. Speaker, there is a whole plethora of things. Obviously, the Honourable Member has absolutely no clue as to what we are doing in respect of buffering people from those types of costs. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. We will move on to the third Oral Question for today, and I give the floor to the Honourable Simone Rasova to ask his question. You have the floor, Sir.

Quantum of Total Revenue from Inshore Fishing Licence Fees in 2017  
(Question No. 213/2019)

HON. S.R. RASOVA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries inform Parliament on the quantum of total revenue collected from inshore fishing licence fees in 2017?

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

Honourable Speaker, the total revenue collected in 2017 is \$22,973.21. This revenue is collected from our Divisional Service Centres in the Northern, Central, Western and Eastern Divisions. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- These *qoliqoli* access fish are derived from *qoliqoli* grounds. My question is, is there a will for this Government to return ownership of *qoliqoli* areas to the rightful owners? If so, when? Thank you.

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. That is a totally different question, the question here is on fishing licences.

HON. SPEAKER.- I quite agree. Honourable Leawere, you have floor.

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. My question to the Honourable Minister, as he had mentioned this in the last session while he was at Kioa where he mentioned something about four different tiers of licensing. What impact does this four-tier licensing have on the *qoliqoli* owners?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

Again, another question that is not related to the substantive question: The licence that I had stated in Kioa is basically a licence that is paid to the Ministry of Fisheries to ensure the security of tenure to the fishermen, which basically indicates that with the increase of licences from one year to three years, it will give them more security of their licences being used during that period.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Please, explain what is the justification of imposing licences to the poor villages who cannot even pay for the benzene?

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, licences are only paid by commercial fishermen. If villagers are fishing in their own *qoliqoli* areas, they are not required. It is for commercial fishing activities.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Same as subsistence, they have to live.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the fourth Oral Question for today. I give the floor to the Honourable Selai Adimaitoga to ask her question. You have the floor, Madam.

Update on the Coastal and Riverbank Erosion Projects  
(Question No. 214/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment provide an update on the various coastal and riverbank erosion projects that have been completed this year and those which are in progress currently?

HON. DR. M. REDDY (Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the Honourable Member for asking this question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to address the challenge posed by climate change, we need conscious strategic re-orientation of waterways management practices and an integrated holistic approach to managing waterways-related challenges.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, up till now, we have taken our waterways for granted. There has been generally a lack of appreciation on the importance of waterways to the country, to our cultural, social and economic status of the country.

We have to do a lot in terms of protecting our waterways, not only to take advantage of the benefits from waterways towards the livelihood of the rural and maritime communities, the agriculture sector for transportation, but also to ensure that waterways do not pose a threat to communities, our infrastructure and to our roading network.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the Ministry of Waterways and Environment, flood risks and river bank erosion is elevated to the strategic projects delivered under the Drainage and Flood Protection Programme.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will be giving more details about the importance of waterways, the establishment, the historical background of the Ministry of Waterways and Environment later on this week during my End of Week Statement, but I will now provide response to the specific question that was asked.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Drainage and Flood Protection Programme allows for the provision of adequate infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of flooding, including the riverbank protection on our vulnerable communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, briefly the following projects were carried out for the 2018-2019 fiscal year which were completed this year:

1. River Bank Protection Works for Vunibau, Navua, at a cost of \$561,292, just completed this year.
2. Wainawaqa River Training Works currently underway at a cost of \$984,000.
3. Nadakuni River Bank Protection Work at a cost of \$975,000. These works are currently being temporarily suspended due to the damaged FRA Bridge and, therefore, there is limitation on the Bridge. Therefore, we are not able to take materials across, so we will commence work on this project once the Bridge is repaired and we are in discussion with FRA and we should be able to progress maybe within a month's time or so.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the above programmes are benefiting approximately 11,700 Fijians. Moreover, apart from the above projects, our engineers have completed survey and detail designs for approximately 10 other riverbank protection works, some of which will be implemented in this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the fiscal year, 2019-2020, the following activities are planned:

- Savu Village - Waidina River Training Works, with the value of \$634,000 (“River training” is a technical term which means that when the riverbank erosion takes place, the stream flow changes its course so what we are trying to do with the training work is to get the water flow in the middle of the river so that scouring or riverbank erosion does not take place.) So, the Waidina River Training Works with the value of \$634,000 will be undertaken this year.
- Wainadoi - Wainibuabua Bank Protection Works with a cost of \$117,000.
- Taveuni - Welagi Village Drainage Improvement Works with a cost of \$400,000.
- Penang River Mouth Dredging Phase 1 at the value of \$252,000.

You may recall, we did extensive work close to \$1.3 million in Rakiraki and that mitigated the flooding that was there for the last two decades. The commercial sector was raising the issue, we have solved that but there were two other parts, one was the riverbank opening where we need to open the river mouth.

Secondly, upstream from the town, we did 1 kilometre upstream and then from the town we did 3 kilometres downstream. So, we want to do two things, we want to open the river mouth and secondly, we want to extend the cleaning of the waterways upstream from where we left. So, the Penang River Mouth Dredging Phase 1 with the value of \$252,000 we are planning to do in this fiscal year.

- Deuba River Mouth and Offshore Channel: At the moment, we need to do an EIA study for that, \$80,000 has been allocated to do the EIA.
- Nawaka River Alignment: At the moment, we need to do an EIA and \$45,000 has been allocated for that.
- Penang River Dredging Upstream: We have allocated \$97,000 to undertake the EIA.

So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, whenever we are tinkering with the waterway which will diverse its course or will change its original course or pathway, then we have to undertake an EIA but when we are restoring the river to its original state, then we will do an Environmental Management Plan so that when you are restoring the river to its original state, we want to ensure that the environmental damage is minimised or negligible. So, in this case we are doing an EIA because we are dealing with the natural course on the river.

Mr. Speaker Sir, we also are looking at river training works to Savu Village which has commenced and is expected to be completed by the end of December.

For Wainawaqa Village River, river training works are currently underway and are expected to be completed by the end of October.

Wainibuabua River Bank Protection Works are expected to be completed by the end of November this year.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to help build resilience to coastal communities to the impact of climate in these coastal erosions, storm surge and coastal flooding, relevant projects are currently being carried out under the Coastal Protection Programme. The ones that are outlined are the River Bank Protection works.

In the Coastal Protection Programme, we are looking at Nadaro Village Protection Work which has just been completed at the cost of \$431,000. Those who travel along the Kings Road would have seen the Nadaro Village Protection Work that was undertaken.

Lamini Village Coastal Protection Work was completed at the cost of \$1 million.

Namoli Village Coastal Protection Works at the cost of \$700,000, is about to be completed in Lautoka. Those who pass through that, recently there was a visit by the Parliamentary Group who had a meeting in Nadi.

Then Rukurukulevu Village Coastal Protection Works at the cost of \$437,000 is expected to be completed by October.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, there are 20 Coastal Protection Works which we are looking at implementing this year, the:

1. Namuana Village Seawall Project - Tavuki District School, at the cost of \$916,000;
2. Bau Island Seawall Project - \$1.2 million;
3. Naisausau Village Coastal Protection Project - \$ 314,000;
4. Matanivere Village Coastal Protection Project - \$242,000;
5. Nawaisomo Village Coastal Protection Project - \$342,000; and
6. Dravuni Village Coastal Protection Project - \$ 450,000.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have started works for the following Projects:

1. Namuana Village Seawall Project: Work has started.
2. Dravuni Village Coastal Protection Project: We have commenced work on that and should be completed by December.
3. Rukurukulevu Coastal Protection Works: Works are continuing and should be completed by 30th October.
4. Namoli Village Coastal Protection Work: Works are continuing and should be completed in October. About 85 percent of the work has been done.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is evident that we live in a part of the world where sea level rise is the reality. The Honourable Prime Minister has been the champion of this and is leading this and domestically, we are doing lot of work to protect our communities, our infrastructure and our national resources, and we are determined to do that.

Honourable Speaker, we are using a combination of tools and instruments, both nature-based solution as well as structural engineering solutions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we want to use more and more nature-based solutions to respond to a problem caused by nature that is sustainable and also within our means in terms of financial resources. Thank you.

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

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to ask my supplementary question to the Honourable Minister: In one of your responses earlier this year regarding the construction of seawalls, I had mentioned that it was in the list that the number of seawalls to be constructed include the construction of a seawall in my village, Namatakula. But listening to what you said now, it has been dropped and I ask the Honourable Minister, what has happened to that project?

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, like his village, there are another 50 villages that we have on our list. On Friday last week, I was in Levuka, and I visited Viro Village and I noted the damage that was done to the coastal area around the village. That is on our list too, and his village is on our list too.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this side of the Government and the Honourable Member, we treat every village as the same and important to us, rather than on the other side, whenever they stand up they will talk about their village and their area, we talk about the entire Fiji. Everyone, every area, every community will be attended to and protected by this Government.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I hope you are going to ask something about the Bau one.

Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can the Honourable Minister, please, explain how the decrease in his Ministry's budget, as well as the delay in the arrival of the allocation for the Operational Budget and Capital Budget affecting all this good work?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- No delays in the Operational Budget.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Well, you can answer this.

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Honourable Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, he is not reading the media, we have just received US\$200,000 from the Government of Korea. We are looking at other budget support to undertake riverbank and coastal protection works. We have got a dedicated staff who have got Masters Degrees from Netherlands, who are churning out proposals to tap into the massive amount of money out there with development partners.

Unfortunately, what is happening is sometimes people here only think that they must be dependent on Government money only. Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a lot of money outside and we want to tap into that to ensure that we top-up what we have from Government to do all these work that we are required to do.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Operations are not going, some are hard.

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

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. A supplementary question to the Honourable Minister: On 23rd November, 2018, the Second Quarter Meeting of the Provincial Board Meeting of the Naitasiri Provincial Development Board identified the following listing of vulnerable areas:

1. Vunidawa Hospital River Embankment;
2. Wainimala River Alignment for Saumakia and Serea Villages;
3. Wainibuka River Alignment for Lutu Village; and
4. Sawani and Navuso River Alignment.

These were identified and were approved to be attended to in 2019. They were in the waiting list but I do not hear those areas to be on the waiting list from the Honourable Minister. If they are not in the waiting list, is there another waiting list somewhere or where are they waiting?

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, they probably do not understand the process that is involved.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- If a Provincial Council raises an issue with us, the first step is for our engineers to go and have a look at it, then they will raise it to us. Then we will say, "All right, the next step is to undertake a scoping exercise." Once that exercise is done, which is a massive exercise itself, then the matter is referred to the Ministry of Waterways and Environment who will then refer the matter to Department of Environment.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Again, you do not want to listen.

The Department of Environment will then go and undertake a scoping exercise and develop a terms of reference of whether the EIA needs to be done.

Now, if the EIA is required, then the EIA itself is a massive exercise. He said that he had just raised an issue and I want to see that list, then the entire process will take place. They are the ones who stand in Parliament and say, "Was the EIA done on that or not?"

The entire process must be followed. Give us the list, we will have a look at that but, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to assure the Honourable Member that we will protect the communities, no matter where they are.

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

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I hope mine will not be in the waiting list.

(Laughter)

Honourable Speaker, Sir, a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister: There are some villages in the coastal areas of Namosi, especially in Veivatuloa Village. Your engineer has come to the village and surveyed the seawall. May I ask the Honourable Minister, Sir, of the outcome of the survey by the engineer, Sir, and when will the work be done in Veivatuloa Village?

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I cannot say the specific date of when that will be done but I want to say that Namosi and Navua are areas which have got the highest budgetary discipline to undertake work there.

We have done numerous work in that area and currently just close to \$900,000 worth of contract has been given to a contractor to undertake work in that particular area. Today, if you go to Galoa Village (and Honourable Mikaele Leawere knows), our contractor is working to protect the communities there from riverbank erosion.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, Honourable Members on the other side should thank this Government for establishing the Ministry to do a work which was never done before.

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

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The Honourable Minister mentioned processes, including scoping. I think that process has failed because in some projects, the project was approved, scoping done, but there were issues with the contractor.

I would like to ask the Honourable Minister, how effective are the processes in terms of engaging the contractors, the tenders, et cetera, and the ability of the contractor to complete the project because I know one or two weeks, the contractor either ran away or did not come or they had problems with the Minister?

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is true, there are cases where some contractors were not able to provide the bond amount. So then we had to go back to the Tender Committee and select another contractor.

Some contractors who started the work then go away, so in this case again, progress payment was made, the remaining payment was held up and a new contractor was engaged, that is normal, that has happened. Unfortunately, the Honourable Member does not understand the procurement process.

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

HON. RO T.V. KEP A.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. A supplementary question to the Honourable Minister.

George Goundar of Goundar Shipping Services has been quoted as saying that he is sending staff overseas for training to operate high speed ferry services on the Rewa River to assist the commuting between Suva and Nausori. These would be people from Tailevu, your chiefly island I am including there, Honourable Speaker, and also from Natena and others from the Tailevu, Naitasiri and Rewa areas.

What type of EIA, Honourable Minister and sustainable nature-based riverbank restoration and stabilisation will you be doing on the Rewa River ferry route, particularly on the Toga Naqavoka, Burebasaga and Vutia River Banks to prevent riverbank erosion? Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, first of all, we need to examine the kind of ferry services that will be done. We do understand that, for example, in the Sigatoka River, there is a tourism operator who is operating ferry services and to some degree, has resulted or one of the contributing factors



is the destabilising and scouring of the riverbank. So we are, at the moment, talking to that particular operator to ensure how close the ferry will come to the bank, et cetera.

So, in this case, we will have to examine. At the moment, that announcement was just made by that particular shipping service that they were looking at doing ferry service. But for ferry services, there are other things that need to be done. For example, dredging of foreshore here as well to allow for ferries to pass through, so we need to examine that.

Of course, we have to identify the channel and the routes that the ferry will travel and where it will travel in the river. Then we will have to ensure that we stabilise the banks and how far from the bank the ferry will pass through. Those are important things, so we will need to examine that before that licence will be given for the ferry to operate. Thank you.

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

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am comforted by the assurance by the Honourable Minister that they are looking at the whole nation, leaving no one behind. I hope, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that you will have time to visit this farmer who has lost five acres of his land to the changing course of the river, leaving only one acre that he is farming now which is in today's newspaper. Thank you. It is not a question.

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I did take a photo of that and I sent it to my staff to examine and go and visit the farmer. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will move on to the fifth Oral Question for today, and I give the floor to the Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa to ask her question. You have the floor, Madam.

Update on eTransport Subsidy  
(Question No. 215/2019)

HON. RO T.V. KEPA asked the Government, upon notice

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications inform Parliament on policies and measures being implemented by the Ministry to minimise abuse of the e-transport subsidy in accordance with Goals 1, 4 and 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I was a bit surprised that this question was actually allowed by the Business Committee because this question is quite convoluted and, indeed, confusing. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would, please, urge Honourable Tabuya not to interrupt, seriously.

(Laughter)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, please, if they could show some decorum in many ways than one.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Honourable Kepa should know that SDG 1 says, 'No Poverty' in all forms. The global target, Mr. Speaker, Sir, by 2030 says, "All men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services." That is SDG 1 as stated by the UN.

SDG 4, Mr. Speaker, Sir, talks about quality education. The global target is by 2030, all girls and boys complete free equitable and quality primary and secondary education.

SDG 10, Mr. Speaker, Sir, says, "Reduce inequalities". The global target is, ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and promoting appropriate legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question says, can the Minister update Parliament on policies and measures being implemented by the Ministry to minimise abuse of the e-transport in accordance with Goals 1, 4 and 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals and Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the actual implementation of the e-transport itself was precisely to meet the goals of SDG 1, SDG 4 and SDG 10. So if anyone is abusing the e-transport, obviously it would be contrary to achieving SDG 1, SDG 4 and SDG 10. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Ratu Tevita Navurelevu, you have the floor.

HON. RATU T. NAVURELEVU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications review the system given by the Ministry of Education in terms of e-ticketing top up which is a matter of concern causing a lot of inconvenience to parents and students? Thank you, Sir.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member obviously said something which is amusing but unfortunately, I missed out on that. But I assume the question was about top up that is causing problems.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the top up obviously is necessary because you need to top up when the money finishes and obviously there needs to be systems in place that ensure that there is no abuse of it. Thank you.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- When can the Honourable Minister assure this House that the machines for topping up at Lautoka Bus Stand as well as Nadi Bus Stand be fixed?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I cannot rely on what the Honourable Nawaikula says because I need to check whether he did ....

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- I came from there by bus.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We cannot trust anything he says, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

(Laughter)

He has a record of misrepresenting facts.

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjects)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we will do our own due diligence.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will move on to the sixth Oral Question for today. I give the floor to the Honourable George Vegnathan to ask his question. You have the floor, Sir.

Sale of Shares - Energy Fiji Limited  
(Question No. 216/2019)

HON. G. VEGNATHAN asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister Economy, Civil Service and Communications provide details on the sale of shares in Energy Fiji Limited (EFL)?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a lot of the issues that I was going to highlight in this question has already been covered. However, I wanted to use this opportunity to highlight some of the issues that were raised when I made the Ministerial Statement by Honourable Radrodro.

In respect of the FNPF advisors, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because this relates obviously to the sale, questions have been asked about the paucity of the transaction itself. FNPF had advised us that BDO Australia is their financial advisors, their legal advisors were Ashurst from New Zealand, their technical advisors were Clariti and their local Legal Counsel is R. Patel Lawyers, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Obviously, all of these internationally-based companies out of the four of them that they used, have obviously their own profession indemnity cover too, so no one would be giving any false information regarding them and obviously there is a lot of thorough assessment and due diligence carried out. So, Honourable Radrodro does not know what he is talking about.

Regarding the actual sale, Mr. Speaker, Sir, if the Honourable Members were listening, I had mentioned that the final sale price will be determined based on the actual tariff increase or should there be a tariff increase at all. So, should, for example, FCCC make a pronouncement that there should be no tariff increase at all, then the \$220 million price will come down to about \$202 million because there is a pricing factor that has been put into that. So, all of that depends on the pricing factor and as I have said, this issue will be completed by way of the tariff increase that has been carried out.

The other point that I also wanted to raise, Mr. Speaker, Sir, was about the landowners. We have actually elucidated this point about the participation of landowners as equal partners, right from day 1.

When the Monasavu landowners who were actually approached by the then Alliance Government, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we can all agree that the landowners did not get a fair deal at all. In fact, they were paid peppercorn rent which led them, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the late 1990s and 2000 to actually take the matter to court.

The Honourable Leader of Opposition was the Prime Minister then and subsequently the SDL Leader who was then the Prime Minister, they did not assist them at all. In fact, it was the court that made a ruling where they had a ruling that said that the landowners should be paid \$54 million. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that \$54 million is spread over a very, very long period of time.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me also elucidate it because they have raised this time and time again and we have already told them time and time again. They were paid peppercorn rent, there was no fee paid in terms of the amount of electricity generated from the waters that were used from there, and again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, they did not have access to electricity themselves - no electricity, until the Bainimarama-led Government came in and then they got electricity. For decades, they saw electricity cable over their villages without any electricity.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, also, those landowners who are now connected to the electricity also have been given shares (if they have applied for it), the 250 shares that they will all get. So, they also have become shareholders.

Now, they are also working and they are members of FNPF. They have now also indirectly become members of the shareholding group of EFL, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me also quote the figures. So, they are paid 60 cents per megawatt per hour through iTLTB for landowners in the generation of electricity. Again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that relates to Monasavu, again royalty payments are paid in respect of Nadarivatu. So, I would urge the Honourable Members, please, do not misrepresent facts. These types of payments were not made before.

Again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the lease payments have also now increased through EFL. EFL is paying them a more reasonable amount of rental for the leasing of those lands. These have been obviously brought to the attention of this House on a number of occasions, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The sale, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are quite keen that the sale has taken place, but we are quite keen Mr. Speaker, Sir, to get some strategic partners.

The Honourable Member has asked about EFL and Mr. Speaker, Sir, EFL has also now formed a subsidiary company which is obviously open to participation. It is called 'Renewables Fiji'.

Renewables Fiji is going to go out and Honourable Minister for Waterways is absolutely right. There is a lot of money out there in the international market, we need to be able to package ourselves properly, get the right projects in place. All other countries do it.

Recently, for example, in terms of carbon credits, Brazil was able to get in excess of \$90 million for the carbon credits in the Amazon jungle at a particular area. All other countries are doing it, Fiji should be able to do that, not just in the carbon space but also in the space of renewables, in the space of waterways management because countries do want to help because these are very positive developmental issues that we need to take advantage of. Thank you, 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.

Honourable Speaker, an issue that continues to baffle me is that, the expression of interest for the divestment of shares was first made in March 2015, and again in September, 2016. Why did it take so long for FNPF to decide to buy these shares?

I ask this, Honourable Speaker, because I am tempted to believe that FNPF was strong-armed into buying this to bolster Government's dwindling cash situation.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member, I think, has answered the question for me.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I highlighted in the Ministerial Statement that when we put this advertisement out, right from day 1, we wanted the best deal for, not just EFL, not just for Government, but for the country as a whole. When FNPF initially put in an interest, they wanted to go with a strategic partner. They wanted, at that point in time, for example, to also have various other controls in terms of management rights, but we rejected that.

We had, in fact, a Malaysian-based company that is ultimately owned by a Chinese company, who put in a much higher bid. But they wanted majoritarian control and we do not want that. We do not want our energy sector to be controlled by a foreign interest; a majority control of that.

In the same way, Qantas had minority shares but had majoritarian rights. We do not want to go down that path, so they wanted to buy 44 percent of EFL, but have majority control. We did not want that, so we rejected that.

There were companies from Japan, India, and they had their own conditions. Some of them said, "We will participate if you give us exclusivity." We did not want that, so we went through a particular and very rigorous process to arrive at this particular deal. If, as they claim, they were strong armed, firstly, the Directors of FNPF who are now professionals, would have actually resigned because they have a fiduciary duty to their company. They, in fact, would have been in breach of the laws of this country.

Secondly, if we wanted to borrow some cash flow, if we had strong arm then, we would have actually sold the whole 44 percent to them. But FNPF made a commercial decision. We did not want to go down the path of ATH as happened under the SVT Government where we saw, when FNPF bought the shares in ATH, as soon as the sale took place, the share price of ATH dropped because the share price were overvalued, just to fix their cash flow issue and it showed a particular surplus in 1998 or 1999. So, please, understand what the situation is. This has been done and gone through a very rigorous process, thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, we will move on.

For the seventh Oral Question for today, I give the floor to the Honourable Viliame Gavoka to ask Question No. 217 of 2019. You have the floor, Sir.

Export Opportunities for High Value Mahogany Products  
(Question No. 217/2019)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications inform Parliament of the export opportunities for our high value mahogany products?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the opportunities for high value mahogany products is quite significant. As has been highlighted, Fiji is one of the very few countries in the world that, as some also have mentioned, is probably the largest in the world where we actually have a planted mahogany forest.

Most of the mahogany forest that have actually been harvested, in particular from South America that goes essentially to Guatemala where it is being processed, are what we call, 'virgin indigenous forest.' Nowadays, of course, given the value that people place on not harvesting virgin indigenous forest, that plays a much higher value on extracting timber from planted forest and Fiji is in a very good position regarding that.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our ability to market that is actually quite significant. The overseas market for Fiji's high value products is, in fact, North America through the Dominican Republic and the USA. Other export markets include New Zealand, Australia, China, Haiti, Canada and Vietnam.

In 2018, Fiji exported a total volume of 3.19 million cubic metres of mahogany with a value of F\$5.8 million, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, majority of mahogany exports from Fiji consist of sawn mahogany timber, whilst the remaining are decking and other components. The high-end portion of mahogany is being used for furniture, decking, guitars, aircraft aesthetics because apparently, mahogany band is quite well, and high-end yacht building Mr. Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply. Can you explain why New Zealand has recently stopped buying Fiji mahogany? Could PACER Plus be helpful in a situation like that; and why is Government dragging its feet and delaying our agreement with PACER Plus? Thank you.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, PACER Plus has no bearing on whether New Zealand wants to buy mahogany from Fiji. Just very quickly, as we have said that PLACER Plus essentially will erode many of our revenue-generating abilities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality of the matter is, and I urge the Honourable Member to read the fine print of PLACER Plus, because if he reads the fine print of PLACER Plus, it will demonstrate and show him that Fiji will, in a way, be giving away a lot of our sovereign capacity to be able to raise revenue, to be able to control our trade and to be able to see, for example, the Most Favourite Nation (MFN) status.

One of the significant components of PLACER Plus is that, if, for example, Fiji enters into another trade agreement with another country or group of countries, if we are giving them some form of preferential treatment or some agreement that Australia and New Zealand wants, they can also have that without even having to negotiate with us. It does not also recognise the fact that we recognise what we call, 'infant industries', in Fiji.

As I have given this example, Pinto Industries in Vanua Levu, for example, is given protection by this Government to be able to produce things at a duty-free rate, they bring in raw materials, also, for example, Mr. Speaker, they are giving tax holidays. But also in respect of that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we give them what we call, 'tariff protection'. So if they are, for example, making sweeping brooms, the import of sweeping brooms has a much higher tariff rate, so our Fijian product is actually more attractive to the local consumer.

Under PLACER Plus, we will not be able to do that.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- We cannot give Pinto Industries that protection, so that is what PLACER Plus means. It means other local infant industries in Fiji or even mature industries in Fiji, will have to compete with larger conglomerates from Australia and New Zealand.

I cannot understand why they do not understand that - very simple. We want to look after our own businesses first because ultimately, it means job losses.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Hear, hear!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- You talk about employment-creation, but here you are advocating for a particular agreement that will make Fijians lose their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have not closed the door on PLACER Plus. What we have said, "We need to have conditions and recognition of the fact that we have infant industries, for example, and let us work through a particular process that will give us protection and ensure Fijians get to keep their jobs" - very simple.

Mr. Speaker Sir, I do not know where the Honourable Member got his figures from but I actually have the figures here of the importation of exports from Fiji to New Zealand.

In 2016, New Zealand bought from us 741.96 cubic metres of mahogany; in 2017, 385.33 cubic metres of timber (mahogany); and 2018, 373.34 cubic metres of timber. We do not have the 2019 figures, unless someone has given the Honourable Member inside information.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, New Zealand stopped buying Fiji mahogany a couple of months ago. It was announced in the media and it is true. Clarification, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, the Minister is answering your question, and I think if you let him finish, he might have come to the end of what you have just asked. Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir. If I can just reiterate, in 2016, New Zealand bought 741.96 cubic metres of mahogany from Fiji; in 2017, they bought 385.33 cubic metres of mahogany from Fiji; and last year, 373.34 cubic metres of mahogany. So, obviously, Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member, like I was saying, is talking about 2019, 2019 has not yet finished.

He is claiming now that they stopped buying two months ago, maybe they will start buying next month. So, we will see as the figures come up, Mr. Speaker Sir, it depends. If individually sold, the individual companies that have got licence from MIC, they actually export timber.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- (Inaudible)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, he has not talked about Australia. Of course, PACER Plus is also about Australia, and Australia continues to buy from us. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move on to the eighth Oral Question for today. I give the floor to the Honourable Alvick Maharaj to ask Question No. 218/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

Caboni Multi-Species Hatchery - Aquaculture  
(Question No. 218/2019)

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

With the impacts of climate change, can the Honourable Minister for Fisheries highlight the Ministry's plans for aquaculture to the people of Fiji and explain what plans the Ministry has for the Caboni Multi-Species Hatchery?

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

Honourable Speaker, with the increasing pressure on wild stocks and other impacts on marine ecosystem, aquaculture is vitally important to Fiji. Aquaculture remains one of the key tools in the Fiji Government's work towards putting fish on the table for our communities.

It is vital to be reminded that aquaculture can improve the nutritional status of the rural population and generate supplementary income. It can also open opportunities for aquaculture export markets, diversify activities to relieve inshore fishing pressure and create employment opportunities.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, aquaculture is relatively a new development for most of the Pacific Islands and its history goes back less than 30 years ago. The culture of marine and freshwater species generally remains at subsistence or developmental stages across much of the Pacific and considerable development is required before economically sustainable aquaculture can be achieved and maintained.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, the Fiji Government established the Caboni Multi-Species Aquaculture Facility in 2015 with a vision to drive aquaculture in a more productive and sustainable manner. Mr. Speaker, Sir, unfortunately, as no one is immune to disaster, the facility was completely decimated by *TC Winston*. This completely destroyed all the hard work and the investment by the Fiji Government.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, like any good Government, we did not allow this catastrophic event to drown our vision of developing Fiji aquaculture. Today, the Caboni Multi-Species project is getting back on its feet. Within two months, the facility will start hatchery production on brackishwater commodity like shrimp, post-larvae and conditioning of milkfish juveniles as future brooders.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, in time, Caboni Multi-Species Aquaculture Facility will accommodate a total of 10 species that will be cultured within our shores. These species include; shrimp, sand fish, freshwater prawn, tilapia, giant clam and finfish.



The development of this facility will support increased economic activities and create employment in the rural and peri-urban areas.

The Ministry intends to grow this aquaculture commodities rapidly with the objective of encouraging greater participation of our resource owners, men and women, to form new businesses. These new businesses will contribute to national economic growth, reduced demand of wild harvest and address the import substitution and support our climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Honourable Speaker, Sir, Caboni will also house a training centre to host regional and national aquaculture training. The rebuilt facility will help to boost the production of cultured fish and prawn, together with replenishing our reefs. This will increase the availability of locally produced sea food to the local market and the hotel tourism sector. Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. M.R. LEAWERE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The explanation given by the Honourable Minister looks good on paper, especially Caboni, its implementation and the mechanics involved. The question I am trying to pose to the Honourable Minister is, does the Ministry have qualified personnel to make these projects succeed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. We have undertaken a partnership where we have a technical officer from our partners overseas, who is permanently based in Rakiraki and work in Caboni. We have about 10 of our local scientists, who are actually working with him in rebuilding Caboni and produce the result that we anticipate.

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

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and thank you, Honourable Minister, for your answer. My question to the Honourable Minister is, has any Government Hatchery ever worked? If not, have you engaged the private sector?

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the question. Yes, all our Hatcheries are operating. Basically, it depends on the level of species that are being brought in. We have to buy some of the species from overseas, if it goes beyond the sixth generation because they cannot carry out the process of spawning after a period of approximately six stages of spawning.

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

HON. M. BULANAUCA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. We have just been around the Fisheries Hatchery in Makogai, in Naduruloulou, in Galoa, and they all need improvement. I totally agree with the Honourable Minister on the need for improvement in order to do our research properly here in Fiji. My question is, is there appropriate funding in the Budget or elsewhere that can actually achieve all that successfully, because research is very important here for our marine resources?

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for the supplementary question. In Naduruloulou, we have the Japanese Government working with us now. They had established Naduruloulou 30 years ago. We have asked them for their assistance and they are at Naduruloulou now.

In Galoa, we are actually thinking of putting it on tender for the private sector to put in their interest. In Caboni, we have got our partners from Taiwan who are actually there assisting our scientists in developing that Hatchery.

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

HON. RATU S. MATANITOBUA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I thank the Honourable Minister. My supplementary question to the Honourable Minister is, what has happened to the Prawn Hatchery in Legalega? Thank you.

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

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, Sir. I have been the Minister for Fisheries for three years, I did not know that there was a Hatchery in Legalega.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Members, we will move on to Written Questions.

For the first Written Question for today, I will give the floor to the Honourable Jese Saukuru to ask Question No. 219/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

#### Written Questions

##### Number of Qualified Surveyors (Question No. 219/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources provide to Parliament the number of qualified surveyors engaged by the Ministry, the total number of surveys undertaken annually from 2010 to 2018 and the total land area surveyed?

HON. A. SUDHAKAR (Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources).- Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Speaker, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3). Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister.

We will move on to the second Written Question for today and I call on the Honourable Simone Rasova to ask his question. You have the floor, Sir.

##### Status of the First Home Buyers Initiative (Question No. 220/2019)

HON. S.R. RASOVA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications update Parliament on the status of the First Home Buyers Initiative since it was announced, the number of families assisted and their respective locality?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is good to hear the Honourable Member on one of those rare occasions when he has actually spoken.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would respond to this question but, Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I could seek your indulgence because this really falls under the Honourable Minister for Housing and if she could provide that response regarding this question, please. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I take that point and I am sure the Honourable Minister will provide that. I hope that satisfies the Honourable Member.

HON. S.R. RASOVA.- Satisfactory.

HON. SPEAKER.- You better.

We move on to the third Written Question for today and I call on Honourable Aseri Radrodro to ask Written Question No. 221/2019. You have the floor, Sir.

List of Trust Funds Created by Government from 2010 Todate  
(Question No. 221/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications provide to Parliament the list of trust funds created by Government annually from 2010 todate, and the average annual balance in each trust account?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we will provide the answer at a later sitting date as provided for under Standing Order 45(3). Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, we will now adjourn for lunch which will be served in the Big Committee Room.

I thank all Honourable Members for your contribution to today's sitting. Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.30. We adjourn.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.26 p.m.