

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**



## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

### **DAILY HANSARD**

**MONDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER, 2019**

**[CORRECTED COPY]**

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## MONDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER, 2019

The Parliament met at 9.32 a.m., pursuant to notice.

The Honourable Speaker took the Chair and read the Prayer.

### PRESENT

Hon. Josia Voreqe Bainimarama, Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry  
Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications  
Hon. Lt. Col. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu, Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs  
Hon. Parveen Kumar Bala, Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations and Youth and Sports  
Hon. Mereseini Rakuira Vuniwaqa, Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation  
Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment  
Hon. Cdr. Semi Tuleca Koroilavesau, Minister for Fisheries  
Hon. Osea Naiqamu, Minister for Forestry  
Hon. Jone Usamate, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services  
Hon. Ashneel Sudhakar, Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources  
Hon. Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete, Minister for Health and Medical Services  
Hon. Premila Devi Kumar, Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development  
Hon. Alexander David O'Connor, Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services  
Hon. Veena Kumar Bhatnagar, Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation  
Hon. Vijay Nath, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services  
Hon. Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj, Assistant Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports  
Hon. Alipate Tuicolo Nagata, Assistant Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports  
Hon. Jale Sigarara, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Maritime Development  
Hon. Viam Pillay, Assistant Minister for Environment Rural Development  
Hon. Joseph Nitya Nand, Assistant Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts  
Hon. George Vegnathan, Assistant Minister for Sugar Industry  
Hon. Selai Adimaitoga, Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs  
Hon. Mitieli Bulanauca  
Hon. Mosese Drecala Bulitavu  
Hon. Viliame Rogoibulu Gavoka  
Hon. Dr. Salik Ram Govind  
Hon. Anare Jale  
Hon. Ro Teimumu Vuikaba Kepa  
Hon. Sanjay Salend Kirpal  
Hon. Inosi Kuridrani  
Hon. Dr. Ratu Atonio Rabici Lalabalavu  
Hon. Ratu Naiqama Tawake Lalabalavu  
Hon. Mikaele Rokosova Leawere  
Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua

Hon. Ratu Tevita Navurelevu  
Hon. Niko Nawaikula  
Hon. Vijendra Prakash  
Hon. Adi Litia Qionibaravi  
Hon. Major-General (Ret'd) Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka  
Hon. Aseri Masivou Radrodro  
Hon. Salote Vuibureta Radrodro  
Hon. Simione Rokomalo Rasova  
Hon. Jese Saukuru  
Hon. Rohit Ritesh Sharma  
Hon. Lynda Diseru Tabuya  
Hon. Ro Filipe Tuisawau  
Hon. Peceli Waqairatu Vosanibola

### **Absent**

Hon. Rosy Sofia Akbar, Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts  
Hon. Professor Biman Chand Prasad  
Hon. Lenora Salusalu Qereqeretabua  
Hon. Lt. Col. Pio Tikoduadua

### **MINUTES**

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Friday, 9th August, 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 Friday, 9th August, 2019 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

Does any Member oppose the motion?

(Chorus of 'Nays')

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

Motion agreed to.

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR**

#### Welcome

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.

#### Written Responses to Written Questions

For the information of Honourable Members, the Secretariat received the following Written Responses and these are now on the Parliament website, and have also been conveyed to Honourable Members who had asked the Written Questions:

1. Question Nos. 104/2019; 157/2019; and 159/2019 by the Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment, the Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy;
2. Question Nos. 106/2019 and 180/2019 by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services, the Hon. Jone Usamate;
3. Question No. 117/2019 by the Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications, the Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum;
4. Question No. 147/2019 by the Minister for Forestry, the Hon. Osea Naiqamu;
5. Question No. 148/2019 by the Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, the Hon. Rosy Akbar;
6. Question No. 170/2019 by the Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development, the Hon. Premila Kumar;
7. Question No. 179/2019 by the Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Inia Seruiratu; and
8. Question No. 181/2019 by the Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry, the Hon. Josaia Bainimarama.

Honourable Members, I would like to thank the Honourable Ministers for providing the responses.

#### Breach of Privilege

I will now address the House on an incident that occurred during the August Sitting of Parliament.

Honourable Members, as you are no doubt aware, on Friday, 9th August, 2019, during his Right of Reply to the debate on the Motion to appoint a Special Parliamentary Committee under Standing Order 129, to holistically look into the multifaceted risks of the hard drugs situation in Fiji, the Honourable Pio Tikoduadua made certain accusations against the Honourable Prime Minister, which resulted in a Point of Order from the Honourable Prime Minister.

The Honourable Prime Minister accused Honourable Tikoduadua of making personal attacks against him. Heated discussion ensued thereafter. Following the conclusion of the debate on the motion, Parliament voted on the motion which was defeated in Parliament.

In accordance with the Standing Orders, Parliament then proceeded to the next agenda item which was 'Oral Questions', as set out in the Order Paper for that day. During the fourth Oral Question on the

current state of measles in Fiji, Honourable Tikoduadua raised a Point of Order to bring to the attention of the House and to inform me, as the Speaker, that he had been physically assaulted by the Honourable Prime Minister. Given that the Honourable Minister for Health was in the process of answering the Oral Question which had been asked, I ruled that the Point of Order raised had nothing to do with what was going on in Parliament at that moment and as such, allowed the Honourable Minister for Health to continue with his answer.

During the fifth Oral Question, Honourable Professor Biman Prasad interrupted the order of business, urging me to say something with respect to what Honourable Tikoduadua had raised earlier. He asked Parliament to condemn the action of the Honourable Prime Minister. I informed the Honourable Member that I have made a ruling before, and that we are dealing with the Agenda Item of Oral Questions and that we will continue as per the Order Paper.

At the end of the Adjournment Motion on that day, I revisited the interventions made by Honourable Tikoduadua and Honourable Prasad, and reiterated to all Members that rulings of the Speaker are based on what he sees and what he hears and that I cannot make a ruling if I have not witnessed anything. Thereafter, Parliament was adjourned on that day at 12.37 p.m.

Honourable Members, in the afternoon of the same day, the Honourable Prime Minister visited me in my Chambers and gave his apology to Parliament and to me as the Speaker of Parliament. He offered to have a meeting with Honourable Tikoduadua in my presence to offer Honourable Tikoduadua an apology.

In my capacity as the Speaker of Parliament, since the adjournment of Parliament on Friday, 9th August, 2019, I had attempted to arrange a meeting with Honourable Tikoduadua and the Honourable Prime Minister. Unfortunately, this meeting did not eventuate because Honourable Tikoduadua was not available to meet me on his own.

Also, in the afternoon of that same day, Friday, 9th August, 2019, I received correspondence from the Leader of the National Federation Party requesting to secure CCTV footage of Parliament for that day and informing me of his intention to bring this matter to the Privileges Committee.

Following the adjournment of Parliament on Friday, 9th August, 2019, I have had the opportunity to view the CCTV footage, as well as read the *Daily Hansard* of Friday, 9th August, 2019.

Given that Parliament was adjourned soon after midday on Friday, 9th August, 2019, and has not had a sitting since that day, this is the first opportunity I have, as Speaker, to address this matter before the House.

Honourable Members, the Parliament is an independent arm of the State and is fully entitled to take such measures it deems fit, to maintain its integrity and decorum, and to take action for breach of privilege or contempt of Parliament. The Fijian Constitution and the Standing Orders of Parliament are very clear, in that the control and administration of the Parliamentary precinct is vested in the Speaker. The Speaker has the authority to maintain order and decorum in Parliament, in accordance with the Standing Orders. It is the Speaker's responsibility to secure and maintain the honour and dignity of Parliament.

Having considered the complaints raised, firstly, by the Honourable Prime Minister and, secondly, by Honourable Tikoduadua and Honourable Prasad on Friday, 9th August, 2019, and after having considered all relevant materials, I have decided under Standing Order 134(2)(a) that there has been a *prima facie* breach of privilege by both, the Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable

Tikoduadua, for words allegedly spoken and acts allegedly done within the Parliamentary precincts on Friday, 9th August, 2019.

Therefore, I am referring this matter to the Privileges Committee and further direct the Privileges Committee to meet to consider all relevant evidence and to table its Report with recommendations to Parliament by no later than Thursday, 5th September, 2019. Time will be allocated on Thursday, 5th September, 2019 for Parliament to consider the Report and the recommendations of the Privileges Committee, and to pass such resolutions as Parliament deems just and appropriate in the circumstances.

Honourable Members, given the need to expedite this privileges matter and allow the Privileges Committee to sit and deliberate and have its Report ready to be tabled on Thursday morning, Parliament will need to expedite its proceedings in the next few days.

#### Ruling – Deferment of Standing Committee Motions

In this regard, I hereby rule that all the Standing Committee motions listed for debate this week will be deferred to a later date. We will still proceed with Questions but I propose that Parliament adjourns at 12.30 p.m. to allow the Privileges Committee to meet thereafter.

#### Membership – Privileges Committee

Honourable Members, the Privileges Committee comprises the following Members:

1. Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Veena Bhatnagar as Chairperson;
2. Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications, the Hon. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum;
3. Minister for Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Inia Seruiratu;
4. Assistant Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations, the Hon. Alvick Maharaj;
5. Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka; and
6. Hon. Adi Litia Qionibaravi.

Until Parliament receives the Report from the Privileges Committee, this matter now stands referred to the Privileges Committee and there will be no debate on this matter.

Honourable Members, I thank you for your attention.

### **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS**

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

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the Office of the Prime Minister's 2016-2017 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 124/2019*); 2017-2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 125/2019*); and 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 126/2019*) to Parliament.

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

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Office of the Prime Minister's 2016-2017 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 124/2019*); 2017-2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 125/2019*); and 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 126/2019*) to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights.

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, accordance with Standing Order 38, I present the following Reports to Parliament:

1. Fiji Financial Intelligence Unit 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 94/2019*);
2. Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission 2016 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 103/2019*); 2017 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 104/2019*); and 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 105/2019*);
3. Electoral Commission Annual Report 2017 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 107/2019*); and
4. 2018 General Election Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections (*Parliamentary Paper No. 106/2019*).

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

(Reports handed to the Secretary-General)

Honourable Members, under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Fiji Financial Intelligence Unit 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 94/2019*) to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs.

Under Standing Order 38(2), I refer the following Reports to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights:

1. Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission 2016 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 103/2019*); 2017 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 104/2019*); and 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 105/2019*);
2. Electoral Commission Annual Report 2017 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 107/2019*); and
3. 2018 General Election Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections (*Parliamentary Paper No. 106/2019*).

Honourable Members, I have been advised that there are no Committee Reports for presentation. I have also been advised that there are no Ministerial Statements for today and there are no Bills for consideration.

Honourable Members, as I have alluded to earlier today, all Standing Committee motions for debate will be deferred to a later date. We will now proceed to the next Item on the Agenda.

Honourable Members, I give the floor to the Honourable Peceli Vosanibola to ask his question which is the first Oral Question for today. You have the floor, Sir.

## QUESTIONS

### Oral Questions

#### Performance Audit - Help for Homes Initiative (Question No. 191/2019)

HON. P.W. VOSANIBOLA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications update Parliament on whether a performance audit has been carried out on the efficacy and effectiveness of the Help for Homes Initiative?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for this question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I could refer the Honourable Member to the Audit Act and under this Act, the Auditor-General has the power to conduct performance audits under Section 6A(1). I would like to read it out to the Honourable Member, I quote:

- “(1) The Auditor-General may conduct any audit that the Auditor-General considers necessary to determine -
- (a) whether an entity that the Auditor-General must or may audit under section 6 is achieving its objectives effectively and doing so economically and efficiently and in compliance with all relevant Acts; or
  - (b) whether the operations or activities of all State entities or one or more of those State entities are being performed effectively, economically and efficiently and in compliance with all relevant Acts.
- (4) The Auditor-General is to determine –
- (a) the intervals at which the performance audits of a particular entity or entities are to be conducted; and
  - (b) the number of performance audits to be conducted in each financial year.”

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you can see from the Act, the Act envisages that the Performance Audit generally is for ongoing projects. The Help for Home Initiatives, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is a one-off project under the natural disaster that took place during *TC Winston*. It was the largest initiative Government has put in place in respect of helping people rebuild their homes.

I would like to also refer the Honourable Member to an Audit Report under the Social Services Sector in the Parliamentary Paper No. 101 of 2017, in which the Honourable Member would see that the Auditor-General, in fact, talked about the distribution anomalies of Help for Homes Initiative Programme. If he can go back after this session to look at this particular Page No. 5 of that particular Auditor-General's Report where it talks about various anomalies where people have tried to pass

themselves off as others and, of course, the Auditor-General does in the observation, Mr. Speaker, Sir, say that the Ministry is to ensure the proper detailed vetting processes be adopted to ensure the accuracy of information processed to avoid mismanagement and fraudulent activity.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we all know that this was, in fact, carried out through the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation, this is why it is under the Audit Report of the Social Services. However, the Ministry of Economy had also an Internal Audit Team that went around essentially randomly, checking or vetting those people who had applied.

Parliament may also be aware, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was in the previous session that we had brought it to the attention of Parliament on questions that had been asked that some people, in fact, were prosecuted through the Criminal Justice System where they have made fraudulent claims and, therefore, some people were also successfully prosecuted in that respect, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

To highlight to the Honourable Member, performance audits are done on ongoing projects, however, there has already been an audit observation made in respect of Help for Homes, and also in respect of the laws that have been put in place. Also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to highlight to the Honourable Member, who was not here in the previous session of Parliament, that Parliament had also approved the False Information Act 2016.

Under this Act, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Honourable Members who were in Parliament at that time would remember that we had put in place a provision or a new Act in place where people making false declaration when they were actually obtaining a particular benefit from the State because they made false declarations, then they are also culpable for criminal prosecution. So these are some of the safeguards we have put in place.

We have the Internal Audit Team within the Ministry of Economy, we have the False Information Act 2016 and, of course, with the Auditor-General having an oversight over this particular initiative and that was actually quite a ground-breaking initiative where we had used the hardware companies to give individual citizens who actually had their homes damaged, cards in which they could redeem at hardware stores.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I want to thank the Honourable Attorney-General. Honourable Niko Nawaikula, you have the floor.

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- It is clear from the answer that the Auditor-General does not have jurisdiction because it is not ongoing, but there are many, many anomalies that we know. We understand that there are one or two internal audits, anyway. There are many anomalies, companies, for example, Vinod Patel.

HON. SPEAKER.- What is your supplementary question?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can the Honourable Minister assure us that there will be a total report of the acquittals and anomalies tabled in the House so that we know the full picture? Can he assure the House that, that can be done?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, what is your supplementary question?

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- That is my question. My question is, can he assure the House, that that will be done by whatever means to make the public aware of the anomalies?

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Member. Why did you not ask that question in the first place, instead of making a statement?

Honourable Attorney-General, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member's question is fundamentally premised on a false basis. He started off asking a question by saying that I said the Auditor-General has got no jurisdiction, I never said that. He should really learn to listen, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

I will read out again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the provision of Section 6A...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So when?

HON. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ...under the heading, "Power to Conduct Performance Audit." The question specifically is about performance audit. Section 6A states, and I quote:

“(1) The Auditor-General may conduct any audit that the Auditor-General considers necessary to determine -...”

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- So when?

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. S. ADIMAITOGA.- You listen so that he can provide the answer.

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.-

- “(a) whether an entity that the Auditor-General must or may audit under section 6 is achieving its objectives effectively and doing so economically and efficiently and in compliance with all relevant Acts; or
  - (b) whether the operations or activities of all State entities or one or more of those State entities are being performed effectively, economically and efficiently and in compliance with all relevant Acts.
- (4) The Auditor-General is to determine –
- (a) the intervals at which performance audits of a particular entity or entities are to be conducted; and
  - (b) the number performance audits to be conducted each financial year.”

If I can use a rugby analogy, Honourable Member...

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Not a rugby ball?

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... if a team goes out and plays a rugby match, you have a performance audit of their performance of that particular game. If they are going to only play one game, then that is what you are going to actually audit. But if you going to play a series of games, then obviously you keep on doing regular intervals of their performances. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the particular programme is a one-off programme. But as the Honourable Member would know as a good lawyer, that when you say 'may' ...

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjected)

HON. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- ... it is entirely at the discretion of the Auditor-General. The Auditor-General is an independent body.

But, Mr. Speaker, Sir, again as I alluded to, this particular report of the Auditor-General's Report of Volume 3 (Parliamentary Paper No. 101 of 2017), they have already made some observations on this, and they will continue to make any observation they find, it is up to the Auditor-General, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Maybe, the Honourable Niko Nawaikula obviously did not read this Report. If they had read this Auditor-General's Report, they would not be coming here talking about those things.

(Hon. N. Nawaikula interjected)

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is already here, they are not reading the reports.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Tabuya, you have the floor for your supplementary question.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. There are families in Koro that are being made to pay for the materials being shipped to them. Now that they are available from the hardware companies, can the Honourable Attorney-General answer why this is the case, when they are already facing hardship, not having a complete house and having now to pay for the freight for these building materials from the hardware companies?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if what Honourable Tabuya is saying is accurate and true, I would please request her to give us information of those families and we can deal with it.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Salote Radrodoro, you have the floor.

HON S.V. RADRODRO.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Can the Honourable Minister explain why the calling of tenders and the disbursement of funds was undertaken by the Ministry of Economy when the mandate was given to the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation?

In their report, they had highlighted that they could only report on the very basic administrative logistic arrangements because those other functions were undertaken by the Ministry of Economy, and also if that has been covered in the Ministry of Economy Annual Report? Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. There are a few questions in there.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the efficient delivery of Government services obviously, we believe in the division of labour and that is how everything gets done quickly. As we also find with any major tenders that are called, as we have been doing, for example, for construction, those actually go through the Fiji Procurement Office which is within the Ministry of Economy, irrespective of where that asset is being procured from and for which Ministry. If, for example, we are buying an MRI machine, the tenders are not called by the Ministry of Health, and the Honourable Member knows this, she has worked in Government before. It actually goes through the Ministry of Economy.

If, for example, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are building the hospital in Navosa, obviously it goes through the Ministry of Economy, we have the Construction Implementation Unit. It does not mean that the tender, et cetera, will be called by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services because they do not have the expertise in that area. We have people in different Divisions, in the different Ministries with that level of expertise. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. We will move on to the second Oral Question for today, and I give the floor to the Honourable Veena Bhatnagar to ask her question.

Recent Upgrading of Fiji's Credit Rating  
(Question No. 192/2019)

HON. V.K. BHATNAGAR asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications explain the reasons behind the recent upgrading of Fiji's Credit rating from B+ to BB- by Standard and Poor's Global Ratings?

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the upgrading of the Fiji's credit rating from B+ to BB- by Standard and Poor's is obviously most welcome. I would like to thank the Honourable Member for her question, but I would rather not give my take on the reasons for the upgrade.

But I would like to quote, Mr. Speaker, Sir, from the Report itself as to why Standard and Poor's said that Fiji's rating actually needs to improve from B+ to BB- and there are four reasons they have given. I quote, Mr. Speaker, Sir:

1. "We have greater confidence in policy continuity in Fiji following the Elections of November 2018."
2. "The Fijian economy is entering its tenth consecutive year of economic growth, despite severe damage inflicted by *Tropical Cyclone Winston* in 2016."
3. "We believe the Reserve Bank of Fiji has generally demonstrated operational independence during the past decade."
4. "We expect net Government debt to be stable, as the Government begins to consolidate its fiscal position."

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, Sir, what the Standard & Poor's Global Rating is saying, there are the four reasons that they have given is primarily because of the fiscal consolidation (2019-2020) and the consistency in the policies of the Government, which we have continuously said and, of course, they have, again, validated the fact that we have been growing for the past 10 years.

There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that there has been a general panic in the markets in Fiji and, of course, worldwide, and I see later on in the week there is a question about the world economy. But as we know and I what would like to just reiterate the point and pre-empt it perhaps, is that we see our major trading partners, like Australia, real estate prices in Sydney has dropped, in fact, which is completely unheard of.

The Australian dollar is now the lowest it has been in comparison to the US dollar since 2009. I think it hovers around, at the moment, from 67 cents to 68 cents - Australian cents to the US dollar and, of course, that can have an impact on us but because we are not completely consumed by the global economy, we have some form of buffer. But, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the liquidity rate in Fiji at the moment is at:

- \$600 million doubled, compared to the end of last year:
- Foreign reserves is about \$2 billion;
- Inflation is low at round about 0.7 percent in July; and
- Government debt is at a sustainable level of below 50 percent - around 47.5 percent of GDP.

So these are the general macroeconomic indicators, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that has that Standard and Poor's to give Fiji a rating. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Can the Honourable Minister explain, with all that positive report by a world organisation like that on why companies in Fiji are having problems raising loans with the banks? Thank you.

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

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM.- Again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I cannot comment on which companies the Honourable Member is referring to, but the liquidity at the moment is \$600 million, so there should not be any problems in respect of accessing loans. Of course, loan applications depend on individual companies' cash flow, balance sheet, et cetera, and the banks assess that on an individual basis.

But also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have seen that the interest rates have now stabilised or normalised. We had a very high rate of interest rates being paid on term deposits and, therefore, obviously there was spiralling effect on the interest rates for loans, other than what we have seen that they have stabilised. But if the Honourable Member wants to discuss it in Parliament, tell us which company is having problems, if he feels that they are being unfairly treated, of course, he can bring that to our attention. Thank you.

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

We will move on to the third Oral Question for today, and I give the floor to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Sitiveni Rabuka to ask his question. You have the floor, Sir.

50th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting  
(Question No. 193/2019)

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry update Parliament on the outcome of the 50th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting held in Funafuti, Tuvalu, from 13th August, 2019 to 16th August, 2019?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question.

Mr. Speaker, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Leaders Meeting in Tuvalu three weeks ago was a highly significant and if I can say, symbolic event, taking place against the background of some critical challenges for Fiji and our island neighbours, especially in climate change.

As the Honourable Members would be aware, my attendance at this year's PIF was my first ever, and I went to Tuvalu with high hopes of transformation in the way these meetings have been conducted in the past and especially, in the attitude towards the island nations of our larger neighbours on our perimeter, Australia and New Zealand, who historically have leveraged the PIF to wield undue influence in the region.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, in my first speech in Tuvalu, I specifically made reference to a more positive engagement with us by Australia and New Zealand in recent times. I spoke of a new era, where both nations have shown commitment to re-engage with Fiji in a more respectful and inclusive way.

I welcomed the newfound spirit of regional co-operation and I thanked both, Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, for their personal efforts to improve the relationship with Fiji and the other island nations, and I spoke of the shared values, geography and history that bind our countries and our citizens together.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that was the spirit in which I went to Tuvalu, as you know, one of the three nations in our region, along with Kiribati and the Marshall Islands that face an existential threat from climate change and where three months ago, the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres, highlighted the threat in dramatic fashion. You will all recall the *Time Magazine* cover photo of the Secretary-General standing in the rising waters in Tuvalu in a suit, which is one of great images of our age.

As we also know, Mr. Speaker, the Secretary-General has convened a Global Climate Action Summit in New York later in the month and he has asked all 195 nations in the world to come to that gathering with plans to enhance their response to the climate threat. I am proud to say that Fiji is rising to this challenge. In New York, we will be unveiling an enhanced NDC - our Nationally Determined Contribution to reduce our own greenhouse gas emissions.

We are not waiting for others to take the lead in the climate fight. We intend to be on the frontline ourselves, leading by example, more action, and more ambition even though our own emissions amount to a tiny 0.04 percent of the world's total.

Mr. Speaker Sir, I went to the PIF hoping that all our members would share the same determination to play their part in the climate struggle. On the issue of more ambition and more urgency, my fellow island leaders and I were as one in recognising the threat that the rising seas, extreme weather events and changes to agriculture and fisheries pose to the welfare of our people and our economy.

My friend, the Tongan Prime Minister Pohiva, made the journey to Tuvalu, despite his own serious health challenges because he knew how important this opportunity was for the climate campaign in our region. We also very much appreciated the support we received in Funafuti from New Zealand and especially, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

Mr. Speaker Sir, it is no secret that we did not find common ground with Australia. Indeed, there was a great deal of acrimony behind the scenes, some of which spilt into the public arena. Put simply, there is a considerable gap in approach and perspective between our Australian friends and those of us in the islands about the urgent need to phase out fossil fuels and coal in particular.

For Australia, coal remains a major energy source, a critical part of its economy and a driver of export revenue. It brings jobs and supports the welfare of communities in coal producing areas of Australia. We understand that and I made that as part of my statement on the first day of the meeting.

But we also know that coal remains a major source of global greenhouse gas emissions, for which there are no alternatives and as such, we are pleading with Australia to have it phased out as a matter of urgency if we are to have any hope of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees above the pre-industrial age. We are asking Australia to speed up its transition out of coal and accelerate its investment in clean energy, an area in which it can lead the world and help halt the rise in greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, some strong things have been said that were highlighted but I do not want to say anything more before I have an opportunity to sit down face to face with Prime Minister Morrison when I visit Canberra at the end of next week. It will be my first official visit to Australia and I want it to take place in an atmosphere of friendly engagement, because whatever our differences, Honourable Speaker, on climate change, we have far too many things in common and we have been friends for too long to allow any lasting damage to our relationship.

The new regional partnership we have struck with Australia is called the *Vuvale* partnership - the Fijian word for living under the same roof. My own view is that, people in the same household are entitled to speak their minds when differences emerge between them. If I can also embrace an Australian term, the Aussies are our mates and mates can be frank with each other without causing lasting offence. I can certainly assure the House that I will be seeking common ground on the climate issue during my Australian visit, as well as celebrating the wonderful relationship Fijians have with the Australian people. Thank you Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L. RABUKA.- Honourable Speaker, I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for that comprehensive response. I submitted my question in the absence of a Ministerial Statement that I expected to be brought up, but thank you very much, Honourable Prime Minister.

My supplementary question is on the PACER Plus, whether the angle we took at Funafuti would affect PACER Plus? Also the Honourable Prime Minister mentioned the words, “engagement” and “respect”, and I would like to just urge him to make use of this State visit that is coming up and continue to engage with respect with our friends in Australia.

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

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- There was no question, Mr. Speaker, Sir. That was just a statement made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. But I want to tell him that I plan on making a Ministerial Statement on this later on in the week, but at any rate, PACER Plus and climate change are two different topics, PACER Plus is not good for us at this stage. Thank you.

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

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. One of the fundamental issues facing the Pacific right now and also discussed at the PIF, was Papua. Right now, people are being killed in Papua, last week there were reports that six were shot dead by Indonesian Forces. Starting from Papuans being called “monkeys” and I recall that in the last Parliament, someone was acting like a monkey.

HON. SPEAKER.- Your question, Honourable Member.

HON. RO F. TUISAWAU.- The question is, what is Fiji doing in relation to the current standoff in Papua? Just last week they sent in about a thousand or more of Special Forces into Jayapura, not sure why, of course, they might not be there for peacekeeping. What is Fiji’s position, given the critical situation now in Papua?

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Prime Minister.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. It was decided at PIF that the matter of Papua should be relegated to the sovereignty of Indonesia, so we have left it at that. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will move onto the fourth Oral Question for today. I give the floor to the Honourable Viam Pillay to ask his question. You have the floor, Sir.

Status of Dengue in Fiji  
(Question No. 194/2019)

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

With dengue outbreaks occurring around the region, can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services update Parliament on the status of dengue in Fiji and what strategies have been adopted to curb the incidence and magnitude of the dengue outbreaks?

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

Dengue is a disease that we are very concerned about because it has an effect not only on the health system, not only on our people but also poses a risk to the tourism sector (because we have tourists) and also to the economy because of the tourism sector.

There has been a rapid rise in dengue all across the world. In 1970, there were only nine countries that had a dengue epidemic. As we speak, there are now more than 100 countries around the world that have had a dengue epidemic and it is estimated that half of the world’s population is now at risk from dengue.

From around the Asia Pacific Region, Singapore had 10,000 cases and nine deaths this year, Malaysia between January to June which is six months, had more than 62,000 cases and had 93 deaths and in the Philippines as of July this year, they have had 146,000 cases and 622 deaths.

In Fiji as we speak, there are about more than 2,500 cases of dengue this year up until now and we have had only one death. I was talking to the Regional Director of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Asia Pacific, he came back from the meeting in Tahiti where they had discussed Tuvalu for example, have had 500 cases and had two deaths.

Dengue in Fiji is not a new disease. It was first described in 1885, we have also had several epidemics in between, one of the largest was in 1998 and 1999 where we had 13,000 Fijians and we lost about 13 people. The other big epidemic was in 2012 to 2013, and 2014 to 2015 where we have had 16 deaths. Last year, we had two deaths from dengue, so we are beginning to see that even though around the world dengue epidemic is actually causing quite a lot of morbidity and mortality, we have been able to control the mortality locally and also in morbidity.

A few things that have happened, Honourable Speaker, number one, is improving the public health campaigns. You, Sir, when you were the Excellency the President in 2014, we launched the “Fight the Bite Campaign” in which we encouraged communities to be able to look after their environment, their sanitation and also ensure that crucibles that may contain water are taken away and are put aside.

We also ensured that our public health protection officers are working hand in hand with Municipal Councils and going through the semi-urban and urban areas and also in the rural areas in regards to sanitation, ensuring that we are keeping the drains unclogged. We are working hand in hand also with the Ministry of Waterways.

When someone does get sick, we have also ensured that clinical services understands what the dengue disease might be, there is a low threshold for seeing them, testing them and admitting them and also making sure that there are clinical pathways for their care. Those are some of the mechanisms we feel have contributed to the reduction in the number of dengue cases, even though around the world they have increased and also the reduction in death, even though around the world they have also increased. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. I give the floor to the Honourable Peceli Vosanibola for your supplementary question.

HON. P.W. VOSANIBOLA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. As we all know that dengue fever can be transmitted only to human beings by mosquitoes, my supplementary question is, can the Honourable Minister inform the House on the current Breteau Index of mosquitoes, and its implications?

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Honourable Speaker, I was hoping in another session to make a Ministerial Statement on the project that we have started since last year which is the Wolbachia Project, but now it has given me the opportunity to talk about it and I thank the Honourable Member.

Wolbachia is a bacteria that is common in mosquitoes and in the mosquitoes *Aedes aegypti*, which carries the dengue virus. This Wolbachia actually nullifies the effect of dengue.

We have started this project that is headed and is looked after by our Centre for Disease Control based in Tamavua, where they are growing mosquitoes that have the Wolbachia. These mosquitoes were released in the Lami-Nausori corridor last year, Honourable Speaker, ending in the beginning of this year. Phase 2 of the project has now begun in Nadi and Lautoka and the greater Nausori area and we hope to extend it into Ba.

This mosquito when it comes and is intimate with our current mosquitoes will then share the Wolbachia on to them and, therefore, nullify the effect of dengue that is carried in our *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes. We believe this will be a game-changer in the way that dengue is carried in the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes and for that, we are grateful to the New Zealand Government for supporting us and also to the university in Australia which is working hand in hand with our Centre for Disease Control.

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

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister for Health, can the Honourable Minister give the status on the availability of dengue kits to the Subdivisional Hospitals?

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. I noticed this morning that there was some Subdivisional Hospitals that had run out of dengue kits. I have been reassured by the Permanent Secretary and also the Head of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Supplies that they have mobilised from areas where they have more dengue kits to be able to supply to those areas. But I will be keen to talk with the Honourable Member later on the specific areas. It might be Taveuni, but we will make sure that we will mobilise some and send it up to Taveuni. Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. N. NAWAIKULA.- Can the Honourable Minister please, clarify the current level of risk of dengue affecting the tourists who come to our shores and what the Ministry is doing about it?

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- I thank the Honourable Member for that question. The management of dengue is all throughout the country which includes all areas in which there may be tourist locations, such as hotels, et cetera.

As I have alluded to earlier, we work hand in hand with Municipal Councils and hotels, and we have Health Inspectors actually going throughout these communities. We do not differentiate those areas that may have hotels because certainly at the end of the day, we have people in these resorts and hotels which include tourists and also our people. So, we make sure that the dengue campaign goes all throughout these areas.

I do not specifically have numbers per se, but I can assure this august House that predominantly those numbers that I am looking to 2,000 are predominantly us, the Fijians in this country and the one death that we had is also one local. Thank you.

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

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L RABUKA.- Thank you very much, Sir. Can I have a supplementary question, is dengue bad enough to attract the WHO's attention so that it puts out those travel advisories and we, in Fiji, include in our invitations for people to come here, like we used to have with people going into malaria-infected areas, we would have to have some injections or we take tablets when we are there and a few days after we leave? *Vinaka*.

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, with dengue, we do not have a tablet, like in malaria, and Fiji's setting is not as bad as what we are experiencing all around the world. So, the answer will be 'no'. Thank you.

HON. MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) S.L RABUKA.- So, it is not that bad?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- No.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will continue with the questions after we have our break for morning tea.

Honourable Members, we will now adjourn for morning tea.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.35 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.07 am.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will continue with the Agenda item that we were on which was Questions, and for the fifth Oral Question for today, I will give the floor to the Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa to ask her question. You have the floor, Madam.

Special Administrators' Roles and Responsibilities  
(Question No. 195/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development inform Parliament on how the roles and responsibilities of the recently appointed teams of Special Administrators differ from the roles and responsibilities of Municipal Councils and Mayors in Local Municipalities?

HON. P.D. KUMAR (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the Honourable Member for her question.

The Special Administrator's role is defined under section 9(a) of the Local Government Act.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are in the review phase of municipal governance in Fiji and Government has taken a bold step in reviewing Municipal Councils' operation holistically. Under the current arrangement, the Chairperson of the Municipal Council or the Head of the Special Administrator will be holding the office of the Mayor in accordance with section 9A(2) of the Local Government Act. The position holder shall be addressed as the Chairperson of the Council.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the recent appointment of the team of Special Administrators will now see the demarcation between Council members made up of Special Administrators and the management team, that is, the Council Chief Executive Officer and Directors.

The purpose of this demarcation is to strengthen decision-making process and allow the management team to concentrate on the operational matters, and refer reports or any other area where decisions that are needed to be made, could be made by the Special Administrators.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in summary, the Chairperson of the Special Administrators will hold the office of the Mayor. Hence, the functions of the Mayor which have been traditionally to chair meetings and carry out civic duties will now be carried out by the Chairperson from the team of Special Administrators. Other Special Administrators will hold office in the same capacity as that of Municipal Councillors.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Special Administrators will ensure that enhanced level of services and facilities are provided to ratepayers.

Fiji is evolving through globalisation and the appointed Special Administrators are tasked to proactively promote opportunities for investment, business and tourism, in collaboration with relevant authorities. They will also ensure there is accountability, transparency and good governance maintained at all times in matters pertaining to the administration of the Council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

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

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Honourable Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister for her response. However, I did not hear anything on the level of consultations that are made with the ratepayers and residents.

So, my question to the Honourable Minister is because the ratepayers and residents are the main stakeholders, will they be allowed to attend any meetings to voice their concerns, for example, in Nadi, I received phone calls this morning in regards to the complex and convoluted road detours, especially around the Martintar area, the multiple traffic lights and the Martintar eyesore of a public convenience. What is the level of consultations made with the ratepayers and the residents?

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

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the situation will remain as is, just like when the Mayors were there, the Councillors were there, they were consulting the ratepayers. The same system and processes will be there for the team of Administrators. So, there will be consultation with the ratepayers.

We want the team of Administrators to address concerns raised by the ratepayers so this process will be ongoing and as it is, from the operational point of view, any complaint that comes to the Municipal Councils is addressed by the CEO and his or her team, and sometimes, even complaints come to the Ministry of Local Government as well.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Lalabalavu.

HON. RATU N.T. LALABALAVU.- Honourable Speaker, I thank the Honourable Minister. A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

The question that I would like to raise is the overlapping of roles that exists now and is creating a lot of confusion in the roles that the Administrators play as against the former mayors and town councillors, in particular, Mr. Speaker, on the role regarding the deemed transfer of all roads and drainages within the Municipalities. That now comes under the Ministry of Waterways.

Then for the car parks, that deemed transfer has been done, yet the properties and everything are still registered under respective municipalities. Yet, for the administration of the car parks is being done by the Municipalities again. That creates confusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think it is high time we all should accept the fact that Municipal Councils are evolving in the world. It is not like what it was in 1972, it is changing. And looking at our own Municipalities, first of all, if we increase the rates, the ratepayers will scream. Increasing the rate would mean, maintaining the roads, maintaining the drainage, maintaining the footpath; that portion has been taken away by the Government.

Currently the Municipal Councils are looking after the drainage component, just the drain, and they are also looking after the car parks, yes, you are right and also rates are levied on the properties. What is the confusion here, I just do not understand.

(Honourable Opposition Member interjected)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, do not carry on a conversation between you two without involving the Speaker. Honourable Anare Jale, you have the floor.

HON. A. JALE.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. My question to the Minister, what is the MQR for these Special Administrators?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- The positions were all advertised in the paper and one of the areas that we were seriously looking at was the business skills.

To run a Municipal Council, we want people who have the business skills, who can manage the finances well and they will be able to invest this money into right projects that can derive a lot more money for the Council. And also we were looking for persons who has served in other Boards, who have got the experience of running a Board and has a directorship understanding of who the Directors are and what they can do for the council.

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

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. The Ministry is accountable to Parliament and I just want to ask when they are going to be filing their Annual Reports that are overdue to Parliament. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- We are talking about one thing, you are bringing up another thing. Would you like to answer that question, Honourable Minister?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Not really, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- Yes, I thought so. Honourable Ro Teimumu Kepa, you have the floor.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Just on the previous response that the Honourable Minister gave, by way of notice of meetings, how will the ratepayers know about this because they want to come and voice their concerns and will their concerns be attended to? That was the question. Thank you.

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

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the notices will be given out. How? It can be through radio announcement, it can be through a notice published in the paper, social media or that is for the team of administrators to make a decision as to how they want to notify the public. But these are some of the means through which they will be able to notify the ratepayers.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Honourable Aseri Radrodoro, you have the floor.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Thank you Honourable Speaker. Just a supplementary question to the Honourable Minister, the appointment of the Special Administrators to carry out the role as being alluded to by the Honourable Minister.

Can she ensure the House that proper due diligence has been carried out in terms of the appointment of these Special Administrators, especially the outstanding issues which has been confronted by the municipalities like Annual Reports and audited accounts. Are they paid an allowance or fixed remuneration?

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

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Yes, Mr. Speaker, Sir, due diligence was taken. We had consulted FICAC for clearance of each and every member, the team of Special Administrators, so that was undertaken.

Besides that, the appointment letter was vetted by the Solicitor-General's Office, we have also prepared a Form on Conflict of Interest and Declaration Form which each and every Special Administrator will fill and sign. There is also a Code of Conduct for them to adhere to. So all these things are in place.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. We will move onto the sixth Oral Question for today and I call on Honourable Joseph Nand to ask his question. You have the floor, Sir.

Assistance to Koroipita Model Town Charitable Trust  
(Question No. 196/2019)

HON. J.N. NAND asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development update Parliament on the assistance that the Ministry will provide to the Koroipita Model Town Charitable Trust?

HON. P.D. KUMAR (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development).- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Koroipita Model Town Charitable Trust is a Non-Governmental Organisation which is committed to building engineered and serviced subdivisions and cyclone-safe houses for the last 17 years. Not only that, the NGO also provides guidance and support for the advancement of poor families by way of a holistic and dynamic community development programme.

The project was initiated to tackle the growing number of very poor families living in informal settlements in impoverished slum conditions in the peri-urban areas surrounding Lautoka City. This led to the development of an engineered sub-divisions, three kilometres from Lautoka and was named "Koroipita". Land was provided on a 99-year lease by the landowners of Vitogo Village.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the first Model Town at Koroipita was initiated in 2002. The town is a fully serviced subdivision which provides wide road access, electricity, clean water supplies, sewerage treatment, stormwater drains and garbage collection system.

The development of the town was initially funded by Rotary Clubs in the region, Rotary International, New Zealand Aid Programme, European Union and a host of other donors and individuals. The Government's assistance was provided in acquiring land and securing connectivity to electricity. The New Zealand Aid Programme will continue to provide funding assistance to meet the operational cost over the next two years.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Trust needs funding for the completion of Stage 3 and Stage 4 of the project. Successful completion of Stage 3 and Stage 4 of the Programme will add another 145 houses for low income earners. In the 2019-2020 Budget, \$2 million was allocated to the Ministry of Housing and Community Development to provide necessary funding assistance for this Project.

This assistance will enable the Trust to complete 25 houses under Stage 3 of the Programme and to start Stage 4 which will deliver another 120 houses. The funding allocation in the current financial year will help the Trust in acquiring the land for Stage 4, preparation of necessary scheme plans and engineering plans and commencement of the construction work.

Mr. Speaker Sir, upon completion of Stage 3 and Stage 4 of the Programme, approximately 600 Fijians are expected to find shelter in cyclone safe homes which also provides residents an

opportunity to advance to the level of home ownership over a period of time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. Honourable Members, we will now move onto the seventh Oral Question for today and I give the floor to the Honourable Viliame Gavoka to ask his question. You have the floor, Sir.

Capacity of Nadi Hospital  
(Question No. 197/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services clarify whether the capacity of the Nadi Hospital is adequate in meeting the expectations of both, tourists and locals?

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE (Minister for Health and Medical Services).- Thank you Honourable Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for the question. The answer in a nutshell is, yes.

Honourable Speaker, the 77-bed Nadi Sub-Divisional Hospital is one of the busiest, one of the biggest and on average sees 300 to 500 patients a day. We have 200 staff in the hospital; 22 doctors, 144 nurses, allied health workers and administration staff. Our doctors and nurses are well trained to provide emergency care and even for those who need to go onto Lautoka Hospital, they are able to stabilise them.

The Nadi Sub-Division caters for a population of 97,000, not including the tourists who come through the peri-Nadi area. We also have a high number of General Practitioners in Nadi, who complement the public health system by referring Fijians and also tourists with minor ailments and then these patients can be looked after in the hospital or if they need to, they are referred onto Lautoka.

Honourable Speaker, in order to provide a high level of care in Nadi, we have also had infrastructure upgrades since 2018. The works are now more than 90 percent complete and the amount of work being done is more than \$3.5 million.

The services offered at the Nadi Sub-Divisional Hospital include; clinical services which is 24 hours, maternity and emergency, outpatient and inpatient services, including specialist outpatient services and for this year, we have had doctor specialists from Lautoka coming to do regular specialist outpatient services in Nadi, thereby giving the opportunity for Fijians in the greater Nadi area to be seen by specialists whom they would normally need to go to Lautoka to be seen from. We also have a pharmacy, laboratory, radiology, dental, dietetics and food services, physiotherapy, environmental health and our public health.

In 2018, there were 124,000 outpatients treated, more than 14,000 admissions, nearly a thousand babies delivered and 18,000 patients who needed minor surgical treatment. We have two ambulances for patient retrievals and on occasions when there are challenges with ambulance services because they both may be used, we also utilise the ambulance services provided by private entity.

Honourable Speaker, we have been working very closely with our staff in Nadi to also ensure that we have a high level of commitment and service. There have been short courses that are given to doctors who are in the hospital setting. These have also been shared out to the doctors in Nadi. Honourable Speaker, also on another note, we must realise that Lautoka Hospital is within 20 kilometres to 30 kilometres from Nadi Hospital to provide backup service and by ambulance, it takes about, at the earliest that it can, about 20 minutes to be able to arrive in Lautoka Hospital.

Honourable Speaker, we did a survey interestingly, this question has come at a time when we just got back the result of the survey. We did a survey looking at the way that we provide service in Nadi; 88 percent of respondents waited for less than one hour - more than 50 percent. Up to 20 percent said that they were seen within one to two hours and occasionally once in a while we have those who have had to wait for more than four hours. On average, a doctor in General Outpatients in Nadi spends up to 10 minutes with a patient, but this can extend up to 20 minutes or more if the condition is severe.

A full 90 percent of patients who were surveyed said they were satisfied with the waiting time for the other services at Nadi Sub-Divisional Hospital, such as x-ray, laboratory, emergency, records and reception. Informally, more than 90 percent of respondents indicated they were comfortable while waiting to be served at the Nadi Sub-Divisional Hospital. This is due in part to this \$3.5 million renovation which has made the waiting area very comfortable. There is air-conditioning, and also fans.

Of all the 87 complaints we received from the Nadi Sub-Divisional Hospital area, all of them have had feedback, investigated and closed. Honourable Speaker, I also want to highlight that with the new PPP partnership that is in place in the Lautoka and Ba Hospitals which is going through its transition phase, this will provide even more specialist backup for the Nadi Sub-Divisional Hospital for our Fijians and also the tourists who come through there.

Honourable Speaker, I am pleased to re-assure the august House and the Honourable Member that the capacity of Nadi Sub-Divisional Hospital is sufficient to meet the demands of our increasing tourist arrivals as well as serving the needs of local Fijians. We are on a journey of continuous improvement, generally in our health care services and we intend to make a wider range of services more accessible and the people in the Nadi Sub-Divisional Hospital catchment area will continue to benefit from this. I thank you, Honourable Speaker.

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

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you, Honourable Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Minister for his reply, very comprehensive and assuring in some way. But my question specifically, Honourable Speaker, is about Nadi being a hub for tourists and we know from research that a lot of the baby boomers (70 plus) are not coming to Fiji but are heading towards Asia because of the health facilities in Fiji. So, I wonder if there is any survey or any attempt by the Government to try and align medical services in Fiji to meet the expectations of the baby boomers (70 plus). It is a huge segment for tourism in Fiji where we will need to capture that market. Thank you.

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Honourable Speaker, the development that has been carried on with the Public Private Partnership (PPP) in which Health Care Fiji, the new company, at this moment, has begun its transition phase in which they are now working hand in hand, and we hope that by the beginning of next year, we formally handover a completely Lautoka and Ba. At the moment, they are going through their transition phase.

The whole aim of that as has been alluded to before in Parliament, was to be able to provide comprehensive specialist services that are not currently available in the country, such as 24 hours a day open heart surgery, comprehensive chemotherapy and radiotherapy for cancer patients, in addition ensuring that there are facilities in place in Lautoka Hospital and the new Ba Hospital. That is an addition to what the capabilities are in the Nadi Hospital, Honourable Speaker.

In Nadi, as I have alluded to, we have now begun to send our specialists from Lautoka, to be able to go and do clinics in Nadi on a very regular basis. Some of them are doing a weekly clinic, some of them are doing a monthly clinic, which includes minor operations.

I have been personally visiting Nadi Hospital leading up to the ADB Meeting and I can say that is a very nice and comfortable Hospital. The theatres that they have is very modern and personally, I am quite pleased with the amount of work that has been put into Nadi both, on the infrastructure, the soft work around the staff and I am also quite comfortable that the current survey has actually portrayed a better picture of Nadi Hospital and the capabilities of our staff to be able to deal with the surges of patient influx and also the expectations in the Nadi area. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister. I give the floor to the Honourable Adi Litia Qionibaravi for your supplementary question. You have the floor, Ma'am.

HON. ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir. I have a supplementary question that also addresses the standard for Nadi Hospital to treat our tourists, especially after the recent mysterious death of two American tourists; the changes or what efforts have been done to ensure that tourists receive the necessary hospital medical treatment to ensure that there is no repetition of such deaths. *Vinaka*.

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

HON. DR. I. WAQAINABETE.- Honourable Speaker, can I make it clear in this august House that obviously, the question is quite different from what I have been talking about. But certainly, the tourists in this case when they came to Nadi, one of them had actually passed on, the other was very, very sick and went on to pass on.

We have the necessary equipment and facilities in the Nadi Hospital to be able to look after tourists, and we have been doing it for quite a while. As I have alluded to also, we have mechanisms in place. A majority of the tourists who are sick in this country, Honourable Speaker, are seen by a General Practitioner. So we are working hand in hand with General Practitioners in the Nadi area, for them to be able to understand the challenges that tourists may have when they are sick and to alert us very early, and that is the most important thing.

We need to be alerted very early because when get patients and we are alerted early, we see them early, we can be able to deal with them and give them a hope. So that is another thing that we are working with our General Practitioner counterparts in the greater Nadi area.

Not only in Nadi but also on the Coral Coast, in the other areas in Vanua Levu that we have tourists, we are working hand in hand with them so that they have the same guidelines that we have, they have the opportunities to notify us and notify us earlier. I think that is the important message that we continue to relay to them.

Of course, Nadi Hospital has the capacity to look after patients who are very, very unwell, stabilise them and if they need to, then send them all to Lautoka Hospital. As we speak, Honourable Speaker, patients who have had a heart attack can have the initial treatment done in Nadi Hospital. Some of them do not actually need to go to Lautoka, they are looked after completely in Nadi Hospital.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, we will move on to the eighth Oral Question for today and I give the floor to the Honourable Alvick Maharaj to ask question his question. You have the floor, Sir.

Operation of Lautoka Hospital & Ba Hospital by Aspen Medical  
(Question No. 198/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications inform Parliament as to when Aspen Medical will start operating the Lautoka and Ba Hospitals?

HON. A. SAYED-KHAIYUM (Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Civil Service and Communications).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for this question.

The Honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services, in fact, touched upon some of these matters. But as per the agreement, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have what we call an observation period between Government and the company that has actually been given the concession which, of course, is the Health Care Fiji Proprietary Limited, which is a joint venture between the Fiji National Provident Fund and Aspen Medical.

The observation period has just only recently commenced, which is 14th August, 2019 and we hope that the Aspen Medical will completely take over the operations and management of the Hospital by March of next year.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the interim, of course, Government has to do a number of prerequisite arrangements that have to be put in place. Of course, Aspen Medical has already started working or doing this observation period on things, such as, staffing requirements. They have already started their own procurement system to call for tenders for the purchase of necessary medical equipment and supplies. Again, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hospital has put in place a new enterprise resource planning system that will allow for the streamlining and the processing of information across both Hospitals.

The Lautoka and Ba Hospitals, Mr. Speaker, Sir, will be renamed. The Lautoka Hospital, once fully operational by Aspen, will now be called Lautoka International Hospital and managed by Aspen Medical. The Ba Hospital will be called Ba Regional Hospital and managed by Aspen Medical as well, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are developing a new asset register. There has not been an asset register done for quite some time for the Hospital which will, of course, give us a good understanding of the staff level, the equipment and the supplies, and any additional expert staff who will be required in respect of expediting the commissioning of the two Hospitals.

Just by way of interest, Mr. Speaker, Sir, only recently in the big clean up literally of Lautoka Hospital, they removed 22 truckloads of written-off equipment, other furniture, et cetera, that have been cluttering the corridors, so there is a major transition phase that we are going through. And to answer the question specifically, Aspen Medical will take over fully by March at the latest by April next year, and for Ba Hospital it should be around about June or July next year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, we will move on to Written Questions. For the first Written Question for today, I call on the Honourable Inosi Kuridrani to ask his written question. You have the floor, Sir.

Written Questions

Mechanisms for Monitoring Progress made by Cane Farmers  
(Question No. 199/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry inform Parliament on the follow up mechanisms in place to monitor the progress made by cane farmers who receive assistance from the Ministry?

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA (Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry).- Honourable Speaker, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, we will move on to the second Written Question for today and I call upon the Honourable Ratu Suliano Matanitobua to ask his written question.

Progress on Squatter Resettlement Initiatives  
(Question No. 200/2019)

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

Can the Honourable Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development update Parliament on the progress made on squatter resettlement initiatives from 1st January, 2019 to-date, in particular, list:

- (a) the settlements or communities that have been resettled;
- (b) how many households have been resettled;
- (c) the total number of individuals from each settlement who have been resettled; and;
- (d) the community and locale where they have been resettled?

HON. P.D. KUMAR (Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development).- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

HON. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, that completes the Written Questions for today.

Honourable Members, as I had alluded to earlier on, we will complete proceedings of the House after this Agenda item, so we will now adjourn proceedings for lunch. Lunch is being provided in the Big Committee Room. It is early, lunch is normally at 12.30 p.m., but I am sure they will be anticipating your arrival.

Also as alluded to earlier, the Privileges Committee will meet this afternoon for their first meeting at 1.00 p.m. in the Small Committee Room after lunch.

I thank all Honourable Members for your contribution to today's sitting. The Parliament is now adjourned until 9.30 a.m. tomorrow.

The Parliament adjourned at 11.43 a.m.