

[VERBATIM REPORT]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS PUBLIC HEARING

BILLS

Investment Fiji Bill 2022 (Bill No. 05/2022)



SUBMITTEE: Residents of Lagalaga, Labasa.
**VENUE: Lagalaga Sanatan Primary School,
Macuata.**
DATE: Wednesday, 16th February, 2022.

**VERBATIM REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS HELD AT LAGALAGA SANATAN PRIMARY
SCHOOL, MACUATA, ON WEDNESDAY, 16TH FEBRUARY, 2022, AT 3.51 P.M.**

Present

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1. | Hon. A.A. Maharaj | - | Chairman |
| 2. | Hon. R.R. Sharma | - | Deputy Chairperson |
| 3. | Hon. Dr. S.R. Govind | - | Government Member |
| 4. | Hon. Ratu S. Matanitobua | - | Opposition Member |
| 5. | Hon. M.D. Bulitavu | - | Opposition Member |

Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | Mr. Collin Sowani Yabaki | - | Director Heritage and Arts |
| 2. | Mr. Veniki Nalio | - | Senior Policy and Convention Officer |

Interviewee/Submittee: Lagalaga Community, Macuata.

In Attendance:

1. Ms. Akisi Vinaka
2. Mr. Ami Chand
3. Mr. Joseva Mataisagani
4. Mr. Dharam Singh
5. Mr. Yogendra V Ram
6. Mr. Pradeep Singh
7. Mr. Vinod Chandra
8. Mr. Bablesh Singh
9. Mr. Kashi Ram
10. Ms. Asera
11. Mr. Tomu
12. Mr. Kinijoji
13. Ms. Alena
14. Mr. Puram
15. Mr. Avi Chandra
16. Mr. Anare Tuayau
17. Ms. Rusila Vatarua
18. Ms. Nino
19. Mr. Mukesh Chand
20. Mr. Gopi Chand
21. Mr. Dharam Singh
22. Mr. Kishi Ram
23. Mr. Eshaan
24. Mr. Hiren Prasad
25. Mr. Kamal Chand
26. Mr. Rajen Prasad
27. Mr. Ilibani Roba

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- Ladies and gentlemen, I will call this meeting to order.

(Prayer and Introduction of Members of the Committee)

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON.- This is a Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights and the main purpose is for us to come here this afternoon, bringing the two Bills to you which are the Heritage Bill 2021, Bill No. 3 of 2021 and Investment Fiji Bill 2022, Bill No. 5 of 2022. We will elaborate on the two Bills to you in a few minutes time.

With us we have the Director, Department of Heritage, and we also have our Secretariat team with us this afternoon.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is not the first time that we have visited Lagalaga Sanatan Primary School, we have been here few times and this Committee has always been supported by your Community of Lagalaga. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank you for availing yourselves in large number this afternoon.

(Translation in Hindi by Deputy Chairperson)

Ladies and gentlemen, everything is recorded so, please, speak sensibly - think and do speak. Feel free to ask questions relating to the two Bills. At the end of our official programme, if you have some other questions, we will take those in as well. But our main purpose of coming this afternoon are the two Bills. We have a mixture of people here this afternoon, so we will speak both, in English and Hindi to you.

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Briefly, on the Investment Fiji Bill 2022, it is a very small Bill but a very important one. On the background of this Bill, Fiji became party to the Convention concerning the world cultural and national heritage which was adopted at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference in 1972.

On 21st November, 1990, Fiji became State party to the World Heritage Convention. It is required under the World Heritage Convention to adopt the legislative and administrative provisions, to give effect to the World Heritage Convention. Therefore, the Bill provides the domestication of the World Heritage Convention in Fiji. There are a lot of Clauses which I have explained to you the objective of it, the Council, function of the Council, the duty of the Secretary, the Chairperson, the Register, Accounts and Finance, management of potential world heritage places, et cetera.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, honourable Sharma and honourable Dr. Govind for taking us through the Bill. Now, I will give some time to honourable Bulitavu to elaborate on the Bill in the *i Taukei* language.

(Explanation of the Bill in *i Taukei* language - Hon. M.D. Bulitavu)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, honourable Bulitavu, for taking us through the Bills in *i Taukei* language. As you would have heard, we have two Bills before us - Heritage Bill 2021 and Investment Fiji Bill 2022. In a nutshell, Investment Fiji Bill 2022 is basically setting up a secretariat for the Investment Bill. Their main purpose would be to promote Fiji as an investment place for foreign investors because everyone understands that in order for the country to develop into a developing nation or a first-class nation, it is very important that we have a lot of developments taking place and for this to happen, we need foreign investors to come to Fiji.

When trying to attract foreign investors to come into Fiji. it is important for us to ensure that we have a platform set for them, and that they do not have to go around obtaining all the relevant approvals and certificates that they need. For example, for a foreign investor, he or she needs a Foreign Investment Certificate to prove that he/she is going to invest in Fiji, the capital that he/she is going to bring and he/she needs to have permission, like on the acquisition of land. He or she has to

go to iTLTB, register his/her company and needs to register with FRCS as well. If he/she brings in development, there might be a request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be conducted, then there is Traffic Management Assessment (TMA) as well. So all those things are required before an investor can start with his work in Fiji.

Also, for a local investor who is willing to invest here, it is very important for them to ensure that the secretariat of Investment Fiji facilitates the process, make it easy and make it a very conducive environment for everyone to do business in Fiji. So, that is basically the gist of the Investment Fiji Bill 2022.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Now, I would like to open the floor, if you have any questions, queries, comments or submissions that you would like to put before the Committee with regards to this Bill. Also be mindful that everything that is said this afternoon is recorded, under the Privileges Act and all translations are also recorded, which will be deliberated by the Committee once we are at Committee stage, so be mindful of that. Also to note, if you want to speak in the vernacular, you can do so. We have translators here who are going to translate for us.

Thank you very much for coming this afternoon. I shall now open the floor if you have any comments or queries with regards to the two Bills. Whenever you speak, it will be best to give your name, where you are from and then ask the question because we are being aired live.

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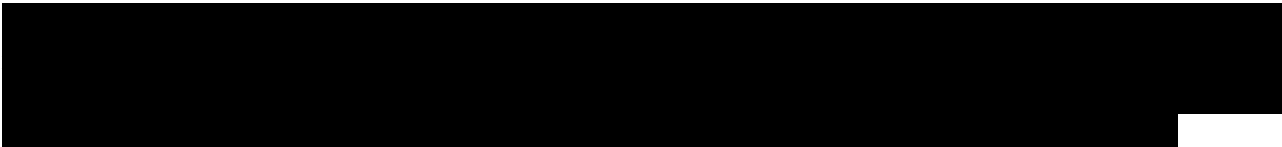



MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, Director, for that explanation. Another thing that we are going to do is with regards to the Floating Island and this is something that we speak about Nagigi Naag Mandir as well. They are going to speak to Tourism Fiji to promote that place as a tourist destination, but one of the things that is an issue for the tourists when they come to particular place is whether we have accommodation to accommodate them in Macuata. That is one of the biggest issues and that is why we are saying the Bill that we are bringing in - the Investment Fiji Bill 2022 is very important because all those heritage sites are supposed to be promoted by Tourism Fiji as one of the tourist destinations. Then we need investors who come in to invest in Macuata to come up with hotels and resorts.

Tourists can be attracted to come and stay and those are some of the places that they can visit. There are a lot of sites in Vanua Levu that are still untapped that can be very good tourist destinations, so until we come to a stage whereby Floating Island, for example, is registered as a World Heritage site, we can always promote that place as a tourist destination. But in order for that to happen, we need to have history so Tourism Fiji can come and get the information on the ground - what time it was there, what are some of the linkages to the Floating Island, what are some of the myths and legends attached, et cetera.

History needs to be captured. If you want to promote a particular site as a tourist destination, you need to actually tell the history in a very good manner so that it attracts tourists to go and visit that particular site. So that is one of the things that we can do with regards to the Floating Island as we can actually get it promoted to other places in the world as a tourist destination.

MR. R. PRASAD.- Thank you very much, Sir. On behalf of the people of Nadogo, first, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights to come down to this rural community. I know Lagalaga is very far - 55 kilometres away from Labasa. This is the first time where opportunity has been given to our people to contribute something as far as the Bill is concerned. It is a great day for us that we have been considered to contribute on the two important Bills, that is, the Heritage Bill 2021 and the Investment Fiji Bill 2022.



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MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you, Sir. Are there any other questions?

Please feel free to ask anything in *i Taukei* or in *Hindi*. We have translators here who can translate for you. I do understand it is really getting hot in here so if any more questions, do not feel shy. We will respond to the questions.

[REDACTED]

MS. A. VINAKA.- On behalf of my *mataqali*, we agree for the Bill to be passed.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- *Vinaka*, Madam, thank you very much for that. It is highly appreciated.

Now, I will give the time to honourable Bulitavu to thank everyone who have made themselves available this afternoon, to hear and give their views with regards to the Heritage Bill 2021 and the Investment Fiji Bill 2022. Thank you.

(Vote of Thanks – Hon. M.D. Bulitavu)

The Committee adjourned at 4.53 p.m.