

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**



## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

### **DAILY HANSARD**

**MONDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2023**

**[CORRECTED COPY]**

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**MONDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2023**

The Parliament met at 10.22 a.m. pursuant to notice.

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

**PRESENT**

Hon. Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs

Hon. Siromi Dokonivalu Turaga, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

Hon. Prof. Biman Chand Prasad, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics

Hon. Lynda Diseru Tabuya, Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection

Hon. Charan Jeath Singh, Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry

Hon. Filimoni Wainiqolo Rasokisoki Vosarogo, Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources

Hon. Manoa Seru Nakausabaria Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives and Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications

Hon. Viliame Rogoibulu Gavoka, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation

Hon. Ro Filipe Qaranio Tuisawau, Minister for Public Works and Meteorological Services and Transport

Hon. Dr. Ratu Atonio Rabici Lalabalavu, Minister for Health and Medical Services

Hon. Pio Tikoduadua, Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration

Hon. Aseri Masivou Radrodro, Minister for Education

Hon. Sakiasi Raisevu Ditoka, Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management

Hon. Ifereimi Vasu, Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Culture, Heritage and Arts

Hon. Jese Saukuru, Minister for Youth and Sports

Hon. Lenora Salusalu Qereqeretabua, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs

Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu, Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs

Hon. I. Tuiwailevu

Hon. Alitia Vakatai Bavou Cirikiyasawa Bainivalu, Assistant Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation

Hon. Ratu Rakuita Solesole Sauramaeva Vakalalabure, Assistant Minister for Home Affairs

Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna, Assistant Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister

Hon. Sashi Kiran, Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

Hon. Esrom Yosef Immanuel, Assistant Minister for Finance

Hon. Maciu Katamotu Nalumisa, Minister for Housing and Local Government

Hon. Agni Deo Singh, Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations

Hon. Vatimi Tidara Tuinasakea Kaunitawake Rayalu, Minister for Agriculture and Waterways

Hon. Jovesa Rokuta Vocea, Assistant Minister for Rural, Maritime Development and Disaster Management

Hon. Kalaveti Vodo Ravu, Minister for Fisheries and Forestry

Hon. Tomasi Niuvotu Tunabuna, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Waterways

Hon. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu

Hon. Jone Usamate

Hon. Faiyaz Siddiq Koya

Hon. Premila Devi Kumar

Hon. Viliame Naupoto

Hon. Ioane Naivalurua

Hon. Mosese Drecala Bulitavu  
Hon. Hem Chand  
Hon. Parveen Kumar Bala  
Hon. Sanjay Salend Kirpal  
Hon. Penioni Koliniwai Ravunawa  
Hon. Rinesh Ritesh Sharma  
Hon. Semi Tuleca Koroilavesau  
Hon. Aliko Bia  
Hon. Ketan Kirit Lal  
Hon. Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj  
Hon. Naisa Tatau Tuinaceva  
Hon. Viam Pillay  
Hon. Shalen Kumar  
Hon. Alipate Nagata Tuicolo  
Hon. Virendra Lal  
Hon. Taito Rokomatu Matasawalevu  
Hon. Joseph Nitya Nand  
Hon. Sachida Nand

Absent

Hon. Vijay Nath  
Hon. Ratu Josaia Bulavakarua Niudamu

#### **ADMINISTRATION OF OATH/AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE**

Honourable Taito Rokomatu Matasawalevu subscribed to the Administration of Oath/Affirmation of Allegiance and took his seat in Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER.- Congratulations, honourable Member, and welcome to Parliament. I wish you all the best in this term of Parliament.

Honourable Members, I now invite the honourable Taito Rokomatu Matasawalevu to deliver his Maiden Speech and I remind all honourable Members about the established protocols for Maiden Speeches and to show courtesy this morning.

#### **Maiden Speech – Hon. T.R. Matasawalevu**

HON. T.R. MATASAWALEVU.- *Au saka.* Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to begin by acknowledging God the highest for the gifts and many blessings that he has showered over my life, my family and my beloved nation over the years. Without God's grace and favour, I would not have been able to fulfil His calling to provide service to this august Parliament and this nation and for that, I owe him all the glory and honour.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Ministers, honourable Assistant Ministers and honourable Members of this august Parliament, ladies and gentlemen; if I may speak in the iTaukei language, *ni sa bula vinaka saka na vei Turaga Bale kei na vei Marama Bale ni nodatou yasana e tinikava, namaste, assalamu alaikum and fai'aksia.* A warm greeting to you all from me, my family and the people of Wainibuka (one bus, one people and one river).

This is the first time for me to stand in front of all of you but not new to the fact that I am here to serve the people, as I had done in my community workdays back in my early careers. It is my

passion that led me to stand in the Election to represent the people on another level. I am not here to only serve those who had voted me, I am here to serve the people of our nation and to you on your nomination to the esteemed role of Speaker of this august Parliament on 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2022, and to the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while the future is uncertain and full of challenges and opportunities, the key learning on what we have been going through from the past can help to direct us safely into the future.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am humbled to be given this noble privilege and wish to thank all Fijians who put their trust in me and voted me in as part of the FijiFirst Party under the leadership of the former Prime Minister, Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama. I stand here proudly on behalf of all our committed and loyal voters and supporters.

I also would like to extend my acknowledgement to the former Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum; the honourable Leader of the Opposition and my *kabani*; the honourable Opposition Members of Parliament; Party candidates who had fought the 2022 General Election together; Team Central – Mrs. Sala Rabuku Vuibau, Mr. Sailasa Rokotuinidau, my brother and cousins (Mr. Sakeo Seru, Mr. Samisoni Nitayaqa and Mr. Sairusi Natuna); our FijiFirst Office (Mrs. Ela Sayed-Khaiyum, Ms. Una Moceisuva, Mr. Ben Qionibaravi, Ms. Taina Lewa and Ms. Deborah) and not forgetting the Samabula-based campaigning team and all our voters from Wainibuka and around the country. To our voters, I reassure you all that FijiFirst is here because of you, as we have in the past eight years, and will continue for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank my family (Mrs. Rokomatu and my children); Mr. and Mrs. Oli from Pacific Adventist College in Papua New Guinea; my 90 year old mother - my biggest supporter, who is always with me from day one till now and not forgetting the *vanua o Naduadua*, Naloto and Wainuqa for your support.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the FijiFirst Government for the infrastructural development works that was carried out by Energy Fiji Limited, Fiji Roads Authority and Water Authority of Fiji in the past eight years. As for my province of Tailevu and the *Tikina o Wainibuka* which begins from Korovou heading down towards the border of Ra, travelling is so much easier and access to electricity, water and good roads is a joy to watch. For a very long time, we eat dust, we travel in the dust and even our house is covered in dust.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the leadership of FijiFirst, changes happened and we, from Wainibuka, benefitted from this change. It is my privilege to highlight in this august Parliament and members of the public what the FijiFirst Government has done for Wainibuka that brought about these changes. These development works are in the form of streetlights, footpaths, bridges and structures and lastly, tarsealled road.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if you happen to travel down from Korovou to Dama, there are a total of eight bridges along the way, at:

1. Dama Village;
2. Balekinaga Village;
3. Naqia Village;
4. Nayavu Village;
5. Naveicovatu Village;
6. Waito;
7. Wailotua Village; and

## 8. Waimaro.

All those bridges were wooden and now they are so solid.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, every village has streetlights and footpaths from Dama to Korovou. There is access to farm roads for most of us farmers. These development works of bridges and wharfs, electrification and water does not only run along Korovou to Dama, but it also extends through Korovou to Dawasamu.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, almost every cyclone passes through Wainibuka, including flooding. The Government does not turn a blind eye, instead it assisted everyone.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it does not end there, during COVID-19, Fiji was the fifth country in the world to recover and yet, we still find a way to control VAT and assist the grassroot citizens of Fiji. Most houses in Wainibuka were rebuilt after *TC Winston* and yet, the economy is still stable.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Nayavu Health Centre has an area coverage till Vatukarasa and Tonia Nursing Stations. The role of public health facilities and personnel is to prevent illness throughout the lifespan. It sad to note that this is not the case, and I will highlight to this august Parliament the needs based on people's expectations:

1. Transport for Nayavu Health Centre is always used in Korovou. Looking at the large area of service from Ra down to the Wainibuka area, the need for a vehicle is paramount for medical and nursing staff to attend to mobile clinic and home visits.
2. Facilities and equipment at Nayavu Health Centre do not meet the standard of WASH FIT facility and is not infection regulated.
3. Nayavu Health Centre needs to have its own Morgue. People from parts of Ra and Wainibuka travel to Korovou Hospital Morgue to preserve their loved ones before burial. If Korovou Hospital Morgue is full, they will have to transport the bodies to Mokani Morgue or Wainibokasi Morgue. This is a very expensive exercise for the people of parts of Ra and Wainibuka.
4. Waiting area is not enough to cater for the people who use the Nayavu Health Centre.

On health services, the need for doctors to be stationed at Nayavu Health Centre. There is only one doctor and most of the time, the doctor is engaged at Korovou Hospital on night shift. Upon his return, he sleeps, leaving the public neglected with basic medical services that are only provided by doctors. This was witnessed during the last three years whereby villagers in Wainibuka suffered from Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and typhoid. As for the current health workers, they are trying to stop leptospirosis in three villages of Wainibuka. As the saying goes and I quote: "Prevention is better than cure."

On Wainibuka development issue, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Wainibuka has great potential but lack the boost from Government assistance to fulfill its targets. If I may highlight some potential and much needed development works for Wainibuka and parts of Ra, the:

1. Need for banana cooler for *Tikina Nailega* and nearby villages from the Ra Province.
2. Revival of Wainuqa chips at Nabulini.
3. Irish Crossing at Manu Village.
4. EFL grid extension at Soa Village and Matuku Village.

5. Need for connectivity - installation of tower/satellite dish at Nalidi Village, Naituvatuvavatu Village, Matuku Village, Nasau Village and Wailotua Village.
6. Need for DISMAC Operation – fiberglass boats and outboard engine (40 horsepower) to be used during floods.
7. Need business investment in bowser and bakery to cater for people in the Wainibuka area.
8. Provision of government vehicle at the Nayavu Government Station to assist in its operations.
9. Agriculture to be elevated from subsistence to commercial level.
10. More agricultural assistance to elevate farmers. This is to allow farmers to thrive on their own; and
11. Need to install EPS unit which will allow 23 villages to drink clean water. The current 23 villages are drinking water from rural water scheme.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on agriculture, there is a great need to look into the:

1. Staff versus farmers ratio;
2. Farmers record for *tikina*, *koro*, farm visit and farmers profile;
3. Farmers development needs;
4. Commercialisation of bananas, cocoa, duruka and vanilla to be included in the five-year development plan;
5. Improve livestock service and clinical services to be served from Nayavu, rather than being centralised in Korovou or Nausori for the farmers to access;
6. Zoning of crop location, economic long-term investment, retirement crops and appointment of staff to look after those crops; and
7. Wainibuka needs mechanical and heavy machineries to cultivate land for agriculture purposes.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would also like to speak on Tertiary Scholarship and Loan Service (TSLS). For the past years, youth of Fiji, including people who want to extend their studies were given the opportunity to further their education. This has given our youth the power to secure jobs, not only locally but internationally. This is seen through the high demand of people with or without qualification from Australia and New Zealand.

Through this waiver of TSLS by the Coalition Government, it just created a gap in the further education level, and it goes against Section 31 in Chapter 2 of the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji which states that every person has the right to Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary Education and Further Education.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for parents of children who will be graduating at the end of this year, please, be prepared to pay your children's higher education fees. Now, you will have to dig into your Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) or take loans. If you are a fisherman or farmer with high hopes of your children furthering their education in university, I have one word of advice, "work hard as times ahead is not going to be easy".

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw our attention to a matter of most significance that affects the very fabric of our nation's future - the digital divide that exists between our urban communities and rural and remote communities of Fiji, as we forge ahead into an era of rapid technological and global connectivity. It is imperative that we address this divide head on, for it has far-reaching implications on the equitable access to quality education and employment opportunities for our youth.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our youth are the lifeblood of our nation. They hold within them the potential to shape our future, drive innovation and lead our nation towards prosperity. Their

potential remains untapped when hindered by barriers of unequal access to digital resources.

In urban centres where digital infrastructure is more robust, students enjoy the benefits of online learning, access to a world of information and exposure of new ideas. Yet, in the remote corners of our nation, many young minds are deprived of these opportunities, trapped by lack of connectivity.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we cannot afford to let geography determine and exacerbate their existing socio-economic inequalities, limiting the chances of those in remote communities to receive quality education that prepares them for the challenges of modern world. This, in turn, restricts their prospects of meaningful employment and upward mobility. It is our duty as representatives of the people to bridge this digital divide and ensure that every Fijian youth, regardless of their location, has an equal shot at success.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, bridging the digital divide requires a multi-facet approach. Firstly, we must invest in robust infrastructure that extends to every corner of the nation. This includes laying down broadband network, establishing digital learning centres and providing affordable devices.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, furthermore, partnership between public and private sectors, as well as collaboration with international organisations can play a role in accelerating our progress towards digital equality. By harnessing the collective resources and expertise of various stakeholders, we can amplify our impact and ensure a more rapid and comprehensive transformation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in conclusion, the digital divide between the haves and have nots is a challenge that cannot be ignored. It is our duty to create an environment where all Fijian youth, regardless of their background, can access quality education and seek better employment opportunity in the digital age. By investing in digital infrastructure, providing digital literacy education and fostering collaboration partnership, we can bridge this divide and pave the way for a brighter and more inclusive future of our youth in our beloved nation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to conclude, as you have all noticed, I have mostly mentioned Wainibuka and parts of Ra in the content of my speech. I want to assure the people of Fiji and this august Parliament that these are issues that affect all rural communities, outer islands and villages.

As Government Ministers and honourable Members of this august Parliament, we have been tasked with an important role entrusted to us by our voters and the people of Fiji. I want to remind us all that we all need to go back to all our voters, listen to their needs and improve their livelihood and economic well-being.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to those who do not know me, I am Taito Rokomatu Matasawalevu, originally from Naveicovatu, Naloto in Wainibuka, Tailevu, *vasu* Nailega in Wainibuka and I am a proud Seventh-Day Adventist believer.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, all that being said, I thank you for your indulgence and to all my colleagues in this august Parliament, members of the public and those seated here at the public gallery or viewing this live or maybe watching the delayed coverage of my speech. Sir, if you may allow me to end my speech today in the *iTaukei* language with a famous saying in Wainibuka, “*Me’u tinia – Ni Amania one bus, one people, one river*”. *Vinaka saka vakalevu.*

(Acclamation)



## MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Friday, 14th July, 2023, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

## COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPEAKER

### Welcome

I welcome all honourable Members to today's Sitting, and I thank you for enjoying yourselves in the game that we have watched this morning on television. May I, on behalf of Parliament, congratulate our Team for their hard effort and also for the Wales Team for their win this morning.

(Acclamation)

I also welcome all those joining us in the gallery and those watching the live proceedings on television and the internet. Thank you for your continued interest in the workings of your Parliament.

### Back to Office Reports

For the information of all honourable Members, the following Back to Office Reports are available in the Library for your perusal and reference, especially the:

1. 146<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Manama, Bahrain;
2. Visit of the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs and Defence to Guangdong Province in China;
3. Vanuatu Parliamentary Induction; and
4. 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Islands Parliamentary Group 2023 Conference.

Those are the Reports that are available now. I will be asking each and every one of you that if you are selected to attend some of these so-called meetings, that reports from your trip will certainly be most welcomed by the Secretariat and especially for us to inform the honourable Prime Minister of the daily happenings in the meetings that we have attended.

Honourable Members, I wish to advise that I have received evidence from honourable Parveen Bala. Honourable Members, please, be advised that I will further review and assess the evidence and, thereafter, provide my ruling in the course of this sitting week.

## PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

The following Reports were tabled by honourable Ministers responsible in accordance with Standing Order 38(1), and referred to the relevant Standing Committee for deliberation in accordance

The following Reports were tabled by honourable Ministers responsible in accordance with Standing Order 38(1), and referred to the relevant Standing Committee for deliberation in accordance with Standing Order 38(2):

Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

1. Fiji Meat Industry Board 2019 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 39/2023*);
2. Fiji Meat Industry Board 2020 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 40/2023*);
3. Accident Compensation Commission Fiji 2020 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 31/2023*); and
4. Accident Compensation Commission Fiji 2021 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 74/2023*).

Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights

Electoral Commission 2022 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 100/2023*)

Standing Committee on Natural Resources

1. Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources 2020-2021 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 90/2023*);
2. Water Authority of Fiji January to July 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 28/2022*); and
3. Water Authority of Fiji 2018-2019 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 75/2022*).

Standing Committee on Social Affairs

1. Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts 2018-2019 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 62/2023*);
2. Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts 2019-2020 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 63/2023*); and
3. Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts 2020-2021 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 64/2023*).

**PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

Review Report on the Ministry of Youth and Sports 2019-2020 Annual Report

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, firstly, I would like to thank the Fiji Team that played very well this morning, and I wish them the very best in their next few games.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the review of the Ministry of Youth and Sports Annual Report 2019-2020. This review was undertaken in accordance with Standing Order 109(2)(b), which mandates the Committee to look into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media.

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs of the last term of Parliament was referred the Ministry of Youth and Sports 2019-2020 Annual Report. In this new term of Parliament, the Annual Report was re-introduced and referred to the current Standing Committee.

As per the normal process for report scrutiny, the Committee was mandated by Parliament to review the Annual Report and report back on its findings. This Report will build on the work that

was compiled by the previous Committee in reviewing the contents of the Ministry of Youth and Sports 2019-2020 Annual Report.

Mr. Speaker, the financial year 2019-2020 was the beginning of an extremely challenging one for the Ministry. This was because of the rapid response plan in the wake of the global pandemic through the announcement and implementation of the Youth Farm Initiative Programme. The Ministry continued with its programmes under the Youth Empowerment Programmes and simultaneously, carried out the implementation of the Civil Service Reforms.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry continued conducting accredited trainings at its five Youth Training Centres, mobile skills training continued to be rolled out across the four Divisions, and there was a notable increase in the number of youth attending these trainings.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the development of sports is ongoing with the Ministry through close collaboration with the Fiji National Sports Commission. In raising our sporting standards, experts were brought in to enhance the participation of youth in local and international sports.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, the Ministry also conducts programmes through its own initiative, targeting youth groups. Over the years, the Ministry continued to uphold an all-inclusive approach towards sports development in the country and ensured that all Fijians received equal access to sports and sporting facilities regardless of gender, background or ability.

I would like to acknowledge the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs in the last term of Parliament for their input, which has greatly assisted the Committee in the completion of this Report. I would also like to thank the honourable Members of the current Standing Committee, the Secretariat and other support staff for their valuable input and support.

Mr. Speaker, I also extend my gratitude to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Mr. Rovereto Nayacalevu, and his staff for their timely assistance in this review process.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this Report to Parliament and request all honourable Members to take note of the Report.

(Report handed over to the Secretary-General)

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

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

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

#### Review Report – Fiji Sports Council August 2017-July 2018 Annual Report

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this morning, I am pleased to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the Review of the Fiji Sports Council Annual Report from the period of August 2017 to July 2018.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this review was undertaken in accordance with Standing Order 109(2)(b), which mandates the Committee to look into issues related to health, education, social services, labour, culture and media.

The Standing Committee on Social Affairs, on the last term of Parliament, was referred this Report. In this new term of Parliament, the Annual Report was re-introduced and referred to the current Standing Committee. As per the normal process for scrutiny, the Committee was mandated to review the Annual Report and report back on its findings.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Report built on the work that was compiled by the previous Committee in reviewing the contents of the Annual Report.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee noted that there were achievements in the 2017-2018 financial year - the most memorable one, and its greatest long-term impact was the commissioning of the new Fiji Sports Council Head Office, the reopening of the refurbished FMF Gymnasium and the redevelopment of the Vodafone Arena.

The Vodafone arena is the first venue in Fiji to assist weightlifting in hosting the International Weightlifting Federation World Junior Championship. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was also noted that Netball Fiji won the bid to host the World Youth Championship in 2022, but this did not eventuate due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, developments that had taken place within the Council now contribute to the health and well-being of all Fijians by providing venues and facilities for sports and active recreational activities that bring people from all walks of life together through sports.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to acknowledge the members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs in the last term of Parliament for their input. I would also like to thank the honourable Members of the current Standing Committee, the Secretariat and other support staff for their valuable input and support.

Last but not least, my sincere gratitude to the former Chief Executive Officer of the Fiji Sports Council and staff for their timely assistance in this review process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this Report to Parliament and request all honourable Members of this august Parliament to take note of the Report.

(Reported handed over to the Secretary-General)

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

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

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

MR. SPEAKER.- The following Ministers have given notice to make Ministerial Statements under Standing Orders 40, the:

1. Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs; and
2. Minister for Education.

The Ministers may speak up to 20 minutes and after the Ministers, I will invite the Leader of the Opposition or his designate to speak on the Statements for no more than five minutes. There will be no other debate.

### Release of Treated Water from the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I add my congratulatory remarks to our Fiji Water Fiji Team playing in the World Cup for a very bravely fought first match. I deliberately wore my blazer and my tie but win or lose, I was going to wear my blazer this morning.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to present a statement as the Minister for Environment and Climate Change on the release of treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant by Japan which commenced last month after the report from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was released.

The IAEA Report, Mr, Speaker, Sir, affirmed that the discharge of the treated wastewater meets international safety standards.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is incumbent upon us to champion ocean issues and the needs of our people and of the region. We do this for ourselves, for each other and for the future generations we are responsible for.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we remain fully alert and conscious of the nuclear legacy issues that continue to affect our communities today.

During the Special Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Leaders Retreat in February this year, Forum Leaders supported the importance of science and data to guide their decisions.

The Leaders supported continued comprehensive dialogue with Japan to reassure that what they were doing was in keeping with our thoughts on what would be safe for us in the Pacific, and for our future generations. We wanted Japan to commit to science and research until it was safe for them to discharge the treated water, and this they did.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we acknowledged Japan's standing as an important development partner both for us bilaterally and also for us as a region.

We recognise the position that Japan has taken in consulting with the region before the discharge was started. Some weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I issued an initial public statement on the environmental issue, acknowledging the controversy it has generated in Fiji, the wider Pacific region

and internationally. This controversy is likely to persist for some time given the complexity of the matter at hand.

As many of us are aware, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant suffered severe damage due to a tsunami in 2011, and Japan initially announced its wastewater plans in 2021. It is essential to put the volume of wastewater into perspective. While the quantity involved is substantial, we must consider that the Pacific Ocean covers about one-fifth of the earth's surface. To illustrate, the volume of wastewater is estimated to be equivalent to filling up 500 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Japan plans to carry out this disposal into the ocean gradually, over a period of 30 to 40 years, with each stage closely being scrutinised. I have declared my support for a report by the IAEA that affirms the discharge of the wastewater meets international safety standards.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is crucial to clarify that my support is based on the science and the assessments carried out by the independent IAEA which operates within the United Nations system. The safety standards mentioned by IAEA are reviewed annually by the UN General Assembly based on estimates by the United Nations Scientific Committee on Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR). The standards also include a recommendation from an independent, non-government group, the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP).

I would like to draw your attention to a recent article by the BBC, a renowned source known for its quality and accuracy in reporting. The article states that "Scientists largely agree that the impact (of the treated wastewater) will be negligible". This reflects consensus among experts.

The recent IAEA report concluded that the approach, methods and plan put in place by Japan complies with international safety standards.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, prior to the release, the wastewater has undergone a complex multi-stage treatment processes, effectively removing most of the radioactive isotopes including caesium and strontium. This is understood to have significantly mitigated the potential for the wastewater to harm marine life and ecosystems.

Furthermore, the release systema and schedule is designed to ensure that the wastewater is introduced gradually, allowing for further dilution. This reduces the concentration of radioactive materials to levels well below those deemed to be of concern.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Sir, tests results by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) show that the treated water contains up to 63 becquerels of tritium per litre, which falls well below the World Health Organisation limit of 10,000 becquerels per litre for drinking water. A becquerel, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is a unit of radioactivity.

This morning, I want to emphasise that nothing is more important to me than the safety, security and prosperity of Fiji and our Pacific Island neighbours. I assure those who oppose my position that I share the same love for this country as they do. As we move forward, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am committed to continuously study expert analysis of treated wastewater discharge and making submissions to Japan if any problems arise.

Our Government, in collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, will facilitate ongoing dialogue, Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the Japanese Government and the IAEA to ensure that we have access to the latest information and updates.

It is crucial to acknowledge that there are divergent views and responses within the Pacific Island Forum regarding the treated wastewater discharge. While a majority of the expert panel commissioned by the PIF expressed criticism of certain aspects of the IAEA report, it is essential to note that Professor Tony Hooker, a member of the same panel, dissented from the criticism. In complex matters such as this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, unanimity is often elusive and national leaders must decide which expert opinions to favour.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that unfortunately the view of the Pacific Island Forums Secretariat, scientific panel is not consistent with the IAEA Findings and does not account for the advancements in water treatment technologies that enable Japan (and other nuclear energy users) to effectively remove harmful radioactive elements from the wastewater addressing many of the initial concerns.

The Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) used by the Fukushima Daiichi plant has been proven effective in removing 62 radioactive elements, leaving only relatively low levels of tritium, which is the radioactive form of hydrogen.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, tritium is naturally occurring and have been released by other nuclear facilities globally. In its recent report, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the IAEA confirm that the control release of treated water from the plant is a scientifically acceptable option. The IAEA has also acknowledged that the final distribution to discharge treated water, rest solely with the Government of Japan.

In my capacity as the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I felt that it was imperative that I support the IAEA Report that safety standards utilised by Japan is a scientifically acceptable option. It is also imperative that I ensure that there is continuous dialogue between our nations to ensure that these standards were maintained throughout the process. I felt that it was in our best interest and in the best interest of our shared marine environment, to focus on upholding the standards and maintain dialogue rather than stand in direct opposition to a decision which Japan has made.

In Fiji, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have witnessed different viewpoints, with a significant number of citizens opposing the wastewater dispersal, as demonstrated by recent protest in Suva. It is worth noting that this peaceful protest marked a significant step forward in our democratic nation.

The former Attorney-General, Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of my most vocal critics, expressed contradictory and confusing views. He initially argued that Japan presented “compelling evidence” about the safety of their proposal and then called for Fiji to assess the impact for itself. It is noteworthy that Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum’s government did not issue a formal protest note to Japan in 2021 when the wastewater discharge plan was first announced.

Similarly, the former Prime Minister, Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, who was portrayed as an international environmentalist, made initial statements in 2021 seeking “sincere dialogue” and “continuous information sharing” with Japan. However, there was no formal protest and it is essential to clarify that the discharge had not yet occurred at that time. Some critics have attempted to draw a connection between the wastewater discharge and past nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific. This comparison is not grounded in scientific facts.

Commercial-type power reactors such as the one in Fukushima, cannot explode like nuclear bombs, as the fuel is not enriched beyond about 5 percent, significantly lower than the level required for explosives. I urge those who do not share my position to thoroughly study the views of scientist and other experts.

My decision to endorse the IAEA report, Mr. Speaker, Sir, was made based on my prerogative

as Prime Minister. The Pacific Islands Forum has emphasised the importance of international consultation adherence to international law, and independent and verifiable scientific assessments regarding the Fukushima controversy. The Forum has urged Japan to take all necessary measures to prevent transboundary harm to the territory of another state as required by International Law. Japan has provided assurances that the discharge will not endanger the lives of Japanese citizen or those of Pacific Islands countries.

Regarding the Rarotonga South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Cook Islands Prime Minister and Pacific Island Form Chair, Mr. Mark Brown, stated that it is up to the Government of Japan to demonstrate that they are not dumping radioactive waste. He believes that if the waste remains within safety standards, it may not breach the Treaty. He also highlighted that tritium occurred naturally in the ocean.

Experts, including Associate Professor Tony Hooker and Dr. Nigel Marks, have emphasised that the proposed release of wastewater poses minimal threats to both environment and human health. Tritium, a by-product of nuclear energy production if found naturally in the environment at higher levels than the proposed discharge.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Pacific Islands Forum Chair shared the same view as Fiji with regard to the IAEA report. The Chair further proposed that a regularised mechanism with the IAEA needs to be established to continue dialogue on this issue, particularly on the provision of updates and reporting during the process of the release. The Chair also emphasised the need to respect the sovereignty of each Forum member to have their own views on this matter.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Japan came to the decision after exhausting all other alternatives. Contrary to options that some have proposed, such as storage on land, it should be noted that the cost of storing and managing the increasing volume of treated wastewater on land, was unviable for Japan.

The storage tanks at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant are reaching their maximum capacity, and the on-going maintenance of these tanks requires significant resources. By implementing the slow-release plan which will take up to 30 years to 40 years, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Japan can redirect resources towards decommissioning the plant and further improving environmental safeguards.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is worth mentioning that other countries with nuclear facilities have successfully employed control releases of treated water into the ocean without causing widespread harm. Facilities in the United States and Europe have been releasing treated water for decades in compliance with strict regulations. In each case, these operations have taken place without harm to marine life and the environment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in respect to the bell that has been sounded and the Standing Orders, I would like to reiterate that this whole statement quite a lot of it is still to come, based on the concerns that have been raised by the people, it is my duty to put to rest any of the fears that they may have. The statement I made is based on science and research and it has been happening with over 30 nuclear powered countries in the world, who have treated their wastewater and had discharged those into the oceans, and they are falling within the mark, or the boundaries laid out by the agencies that make sure that whatever they discharge, is safe.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, and the honourable Prime Minister, this is an issue that goes to the heart of every Fijian. For this matter, there is a start point and that point is just very constitutional. In it, there is a particular Section 40, and I will read it aloud for the purposes of every



Fijian hearing what we, as Parliamentarians, must do. Section 40 is with respect to environmental rights and, I quote:

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

It is our job to ensure that our oceans are protected. It was not so long ago when the motion was moved, not even by the honourable Opposition Members, it was moved by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister Kamikamica. It gathered the support of the whole Parliament. Not a single person in this particular Parliament disagreed with that motion. Why? Because of that Section in this particular book and because we wanted to protect the future generations in Fiji. It is our ocean. The honourable Prime Minister (forgive me Sir if I am going to sound harsh today), took it upon himself to decide because he thinks that the scientific proof is okay.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will hold up my hand, because I have been part of the discussions with this, I have seen the differing scientific reports that say otherwise. You have seen people protesting and I might add, we were not even allowed to protest for that, but we have seen people protesting, not just here, but around the world with respect to this particular discharge.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there was an impassioned speech here by everyone, honourable Deputy Prime Minister spoke about it, everyone who could that day spoke about it. The science is still inconclusive. We cannot and we must not. We must make sure that we continue in the same vein that we have as the protectors of the environment. Fiji has become a massive voice around the world with respect to the environment. What now? What are they going to call us now when suddenly we have decided that we are going to say that it is alright to release that nuclear wastewater into the Pacific Ocean?

That seat of ours is now in question. I understand, we understand, we all understand our relationship with Japan but there are times when we would differ, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The science is still inconclusive.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we, as a nation, are also in a position where we guide our Pacific Island brothers and sisters, they look to us for guidance, they look to us so much. Mr. Speaker, Sir, that dumping also violates the Rarotonga Treaty. What happened to that? We are signatories. What happens to that? We are a leading voice in the Pacific region, we have a long history of leadership in the Pacific region.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hear, hear!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not just a creek, this is the whole of the Pacific Ocean and, yes, we must get, and the operative word here is conclusive scientific results. Right now, the scientific results are still inconclusive.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a huge economy, a huge country, a huge power in the world like China has suddenly decided they are going to completely ban Japanese fish. What does that say to us? Mr. Speaker, Sir, they ...

(Inaudible interjections)

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Even South Korea.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- South Korea also.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, you can say geopolitics if you want to but that is not a decision that is taken lightly. They have the necessary expertise we do not, there are several conflicting reports. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have here different reports from different Green Peace Universities, et cetera, that say and I quote, “the proof is still inconclusive”.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I urge the honourable Prime Minister that in light of the fact that this whole Parliament represents every single citizen in Fiji condemn this. We must continue to condemn it, we must continue to condemn it with the proviso obviously that says that, until we get absolute conclusive proof, that it is alright for disbursement, and again when I say that, the question was asked by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and he said it very, very passionately, Sir, if it is alright to put in the Pacific Ocean why cannot they put it on their gardens, in their rivers. What is it? I could stand here for an hour Mr. Speaker, Sir, talking about tritium and all the different things.

There are 64 radioactive elements that actually go into the ocean. Of those, they have a shelf life, some go to a thousand years, some go to 14 years. If tritium is actually ingested by the fish, it gives it an extra life! What happens to our *Walu*? Are we going to end up with two-headed *Walu*? Who knows?

But Mr. Speaker, Sir, I plead on behalf of every single Fijian and I know this on behalf of every single person in government who stood up and spoke on it with the honourable Prime Minister please retrack what you did, retrack it unless we get conclusive proof.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hear, hear!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- We cannot, we must not hurt our future generations. The rest of the world has hurt our future generations already. We have a higher seat in every single table, in every place that we visit Sir, Fiji has a massive reputation in terms of being the protectors of environment. We must continue in that same old and I urge the honourable Prime Minister, please Sir, we must protect our future generations. The science is inconclusive. We do not know what it is going to do to human health and that is the major question that still has not been answered.

MR. SPEAKER.- Please, round off.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders, I have been a part of it, Sir, so I know. Once again, Sir, my time is up but I urge you honourable Prime Minister, please, reconsider your stance with respect to that because the International Atomic Agency Report, as we all know, there are many things that they have done that are inconclusive and they have been condemned by the developed nations with respect to that.

### 2023 Fiji National Education Summit

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition and fellow Members of Parliament; I would also like to take this time to congratulate and thank our Fiji Water Flying Fijians gladiators for their excellent match against Wales this morning, and we look forward to more positive results in the remaining pool games in 2023 World Cup.

I also would like to take this time, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to wish all the students, teachers, parents, guardians and all stakeholders well as they embark on the Term 3 academic year starting this week.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to brief this august Parliament on the upcoming Fiji National Education Summit that will be convened from 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 to 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2023 at the

Sheraton Denarau, Nadi with the theme, “Transforming our Education System, Building and Supporting Resilient Fijians”.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I do that, allow me to provide some historical background into how the concept of gathering public opinion and views through education summits and commissions have happened in Fiji in the past.

In 1969, Mr. Speaker, Sir, just before Fiji became independent the colonial government convened the first education commission to gather public opinion and input into an education system that will best meet the aspirations and the future of Fiji’s children. One of the most transformative outcome I may say of the 1969 Education Summit Commission was the agreement to establish Junior Secondary Schools in rural areas to make secondary education much more accessible to rural students around the country at least to Form 4 level.

Junior Secondary Schools were established, such as Ratu Finau Junior Secondary School and Adi Maopa Junior Secondary School in the Lau Province. In the Province of Lomaviti, Gau Junior Secondary Schools and Koro Junior Secondary School. In Bua, Naikavaki Junior Secondary School and in Cakaudrove, Napuka Junior Secondary School, Saqani Junior Secondary School and Vaturova Koroalau Junior Secondary School. Other Junior Secondary Schools were established in other Provinces.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I say transformative because the establishment of junior secondary schools in rural areas really transformed education delivery and put a halt to rural urban migration for rural families because of education transition for their children as a transition from primary to secondary education which at the time was only available in urban centres. As of today, Sir, all these junior secondary schools have expanded into full secondary status with some conducting Year 13 level of education.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, 30 years later in 1999 another Education Commission was convened as an initiative of the Fiji Labour Government at that time. The Commissioners were appointed and went around the country gathering views and ideas from all segments of societies and communities on what they perceive should be included in any future education plan in Fiji.

Unfortunately, the work of the Commission was disrupted by the political upheaval and this resulted in the downgrading of the final outcome of the panel report rather than commission review report as the Commissioners left before their report was finalised.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in 2005 the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL) Government decided to convene an education summit to engage with our stakeholders and the wider community seeking their views on the future of education in the country. This resulted in the launching of the Suva Declaration on Education in Fiji providing a quality framework for education development in Fiji. However, the political upheaval of 2006 resulted in the shelving of the Suva Declaration.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, consultation is key to allowing policies to be owned by our people and so the National Education Framework that will be an outcome of the Fiji National Education Summit will ensure that education is equitable, standardised and effective and that is aligned with the needs of the country and its citizens.

The Coalition Government is providing the opportunity to all stakeholders and communities who engage in education in the country to become part of the consultation leading up to enduring the national education summit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Education has put together a status of education report that shows the status of education in the country as the Coalition Government came into Government.

The report shows huge concern areas that need urgent attention such as the TVET subsector, the organisation structure of the Ministry, status and work conditions of teachers, assessment system and grant distribution, to name a few. The status report has been discussed during the pre-summit consultation and has helped guide the development of a new Fiji Education Policy Framework that will be presented at the National Education Summit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji being the newest member to be part of the Global Pacific Education (GPE), the global funding mechanism providing funds to support countries transform their education system to achieve quality education for all boys and girls. The Ministry of Education has managed to merge the National Education Summit with the GPE processes for cost effectiveness and efficiency as they work towards similar goals. The revised cost for the Fiji National Education Summit is now set at \$266,576 from the initial \$250,000.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Education is grateful that funding provided by GPE can be utilised to fund the pre-summit activities as well as the summit itself and we acknowledge the support of UNICEF, who are the grant agent for GPE funding in Fiji in facilitating the release of funds to fund the National Education Summit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a wide range of stakeholders have been meeting since May 2023 to put together seven thematic areas as the focus area for a new Fiji Education Policy Framework. The seven thematic areas are:

1. Curriculum and Sustainable Development and Quality Assurance and Assessment;
2. Teaching profession and leadership;
3. Early Childhood Education, inclusive education access, equitable safe and healthy schools;
4. Financing of education and effective governance;
5. Technical vocational education and training non-formal and life-long learning;
6. Digital learning and transformation technology, integration and cyber-safety; and
7. Education Policy, planning, research and data.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, pre-summit consultations have been held in the four Divisions - Levuka for the Eastern Division, Labasa for the Northern Division, Suva for the Central Division and Nadi for the Western Division. In all the consultations, a virtual platform was also established where those in remote areas were able to link in and be part of the consultations.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, members of the public who wished to make presentations in person were also catered for by the consultation teams. I can say with confidence that the Ministry of Education has worked hard to be as inclusive as it could be in the pre-summit consultations to facilitate public consultations and the responses from the public was indeed overwhelming and encouraging as we look into a future where the people are assuring us that they want to be partners in transforming education in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the National Education Programme will run for three days from 20<sup>th</sup> September to 22<sup>nd</sup> September; approximately 150 participants are expected to participate in the Summit which includes our education donor partners, Government and non-government agencies, statutory and private organisations. The Summit program is structured to allow for this wide cross section of stakeholders to participate and become part of the panel discussion and speakers at plenary sessions.

Analysis of school enrolment rates Mr. Speaker, Sir, has shown a large number of students, out of school students who are of school age particularly at the secondary school age level. The Education Summit Programme provides a space for participants to discuss the issues of out of school students and consider solutions to the issues.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the case of those already in schools, some are at risk of dropping out due to limited learning pathways in the curriculum. Unfortunately, the school programmes are limited and are exam oriented. Space is also provided for teacher training institutions to be part of the discussions in regards to teacher training and development. We are also providing an opportunity for our development partners to share their support towards the education sector in Fiji and consider mechanisms for closer collaboration.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the main outcome of the National Education Summit is a Fiji National Education Policy Framework document that has been developed collaboratively during pre-summit consultations to guide the education development in Fiji over the next 10 years. The document outlines the main strategies in developing education in the country under the seven thematic areas as earlier outlined.

We understand the employment landscapes in the country and through the processes of GPE Funding and Education Sector Analysis has been undertaken by specialists and the report has provided evidence in the development of the new education policy framework.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, following the National Education Summit will be the establishment of an Education Commission as part of Government's policies in the development of the education sector. The intention is to bring together a group of experts to be called Commissioners to look deeply into the National Education Policy Framework which is the main summit's outcome documents.

The appointed experts will be determined by the focus area of each thematic area in the policy framework. We will be engaging experts in areas such as the curriculum, an assessment teacher development and training, early childhood and inclusive education, technical and vocational education, education and information technology, child protection and education in emergencies and education policy planning, research and data.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry as part of the Education Summit documentation has also developed a draft education sector plan for the first phase of implementing the National Education Policy Framework. The sector plan further unpacks the strategies under each thematic area. The Ministry of Education intends to implement the new Fiji Education Policy Framework in three phases. For each phase, education sector plans will be developed based on the strategies of the Fallacy Framework. A robust monitoring framework will be developed to ensure close monitoring and implementation will be undertaken and assessing the continued relevance of these strategies as defined in the policy framework.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry will continue to engage the thematic area taskforces in monitoring processes of implementation of the policy framework to continue that strong leadership role of our education stakeholders and continue to build a strong sense of ownership of the policy framework.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is important in transforming education in the country and efforts in building resilience in the education process in the phase of pandemics and disasters. Let us learn from the recent global events and through our education system build resilient Fijians who are able to survive and thrive in whatever situations that they encounter.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank all individuals, regional and international agencies, who have worked with us and have been part of our journey in preparing towards the Fiji National Education Summit.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his Ministerial Statement. Although he is not from the education teaching faculty or has experience in the teaching world, he has presented a very good Ministerial Statement with a very focused vision of how the Ministry is going to transform the education sector, and I appreciate that, at least.

In the past, we have been always hearing about this education commission as the only solution to the problem. Let us set up education commission, that was the thinking but now I can see that thinking has been further diluted and there is a realisation that we need to work on the education sector plan and that can only be done through evidence-based research.

I just want to correct the honourable Minister by saying that all these works started actually in the month of May 2023 - that is incorrect. The work started last year, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The first step was to present the Cabinet paper, get approval to join the GPE, we became a member of GPE and after that, we were working very closely with UNICEF.

Sir, UNICEF came on board, in fact, they were the ones assisting the Ministry in conducting not just the workshop but technical workshops as well as including consultation. So, these two processes were happening simultaneously, and the idea was to gather information, gather data, clean out this data and then draw some of the thematic areas where the Ministry needs to work towards.

The three key areas that were identified during that time and, of course, it will change now with the new Government, we looked at three areas. The first one was TVET reform, technology enhanced learning, how do we include computer-based teaching and learning and also teacher welfare. So, those were the three key areas that we worked out that needs to be looked at rather than just focusing on curriculum, because as soon as you touch TVET reform, automatically you need to look at the total curriculum of the school or even tertiary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while we are doing what we can at the Ministry level, I want to highlight a problem that still exists, which is the quality of teachers coming out of the tertiary institutions. During my short period at the Ministry of Education, I visited more than 60 schools and had been having consultations with school management committees, teachers, parents, students and even with tertiary institutions. Whenever I visited schools and addressed the teachers, during that consultation, I understood that teachers were not even aware of the legislation guiding their profession. This is how bad things are.

In other words, at university, when they are trained to become teachers, the laws are not discussed with them, they do not know about the child protection legislation, they do not know about the Sex Offender Act in place. It is extremely important that the tertiary institutions need to support the Ministry of Education by producing quality teachers; teachers who are able to drive change and develop skills in our students rather than rote learning and exam-centred teaching which is what we see today. If we do not change that, no matter what we do at the national level, we will not be able to achieve the good outcome that the honourable Minister is thinking that we will be able to derive from the Education Summit. That is one area that needs to be looked at very seriously - improving the quality of our teachers.

Along with that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I appreciate the honourable Minister's briefing, particularly the fact that they will be holding this Education Summit because the idea was to have small consultations, technical workshops, ultimately Education Summit, and then you set up Education

Commission, not to develop the framework, but to oversee the implementation of the policies that are derived because you need to have an independent group that should be overseeing the implementation of policies in the education sector.

The education sector is not just the Ministry, but it is the employers, students, parents and tertiary institutions. There are many people involved, and therefore Education Commission is definitely needed but as an overseer and not in developing the framework because that can be done by technical people.

### **SPEAKER'S RULING**

#### Urgent Oral Question – Hon. I.B. Seruiratu

Honourable Members, on to the next Agenda item, I have received an Urgent Oral Question from the honourable Leader of the Opposition with respect to recent reports of people being reported to have fallen sick and seven, unfortunately, have died in the general areas of Balevuto, Nukuloa, Nacaci and Toge in Ba due to waterborne infections. I will now proceed to give my ruling with respect to the Urgent Oral Question.

Honourable Members, I wish to clarify that Standing Order 43(1) provides –

- (i) That a written copy of the question must be delivered to the Secretary-General one hour before the sitting, in which the question will be asked. I can confirm that this was adhered to.
- (ii) The question must be of an urgent character and relates to a matter of public importance in which the Speaker must decide whether the question satisfies the requirement of urgency and public importance.

Honourable Members, I am satisfied that the Urgent Oral Question is of an urgent character and relates to a matter of public importance. Whilst at the same time, I can confirm that a joint statement by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Water Authority of Fiji and the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management on the diarrhoea outbreak in Balevuto, Ba was released on Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2023.

I am also concerned that perhaps not all Fijians may have had the opportunity to read that statement. In that respect, I am allowing the Urgent Oral Question by the honourable Leader of the Opposition to be asked first today and pursuant to Standing Order 43(3), Oral Question No. 89/2023 will be omitted accordingly, and that is already in the Standing Order.

(Oral Question No. 89/2023 has lapsed)

### **QUESTIONS**

#### Urgent Oral Question

Diarrhoea Disease Outbreak at Balevuto, Ba

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, to allow this question under Standing Order 43, the question is directed to the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs.

MR. SPEAKER.- May I make a correction there, honourable Leader of the Opposition. It

should be directed at the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services because they have made statements as well, not to the honourable Prime Minister.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you, Sir.

Therefore, I am directing the question to the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services. The question is:

A few, as reported, have fallen sick and seven, unfortunately, have died in the general areas of Balevuto, Nukuloa, Nacaci and Toge in Ba due to waterborne infections. Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services explain the immediate response the Government has carried out and future plans to address the plight of these communities in their water project?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to update Parliament on the recent diarrhoea disease outbreak at the Balevuto medical area and the Ba Health Subdivision. Sir, the Ministry of Health's team in the Western Division, in particular, Ba Command Centre and Ba Subdivisional Outbreak Response Team have been tracking the reported outbreak of diarrhoeal illness in the Balevuto medical area.

From 4<sup>th</sup> September to 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 there have been 31 cases reported with another 30 reported in the previous week. The cases are from the communities as mentioned by the honourable Leader of the Opposition with signs and symptoms of fever, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, joint pains and body pains, Sir. So, far 12 cases have required admission to hospital with relatively short hospital stay of two to three days where they responded well to antibiotics, recovered and have been discharged back to their homes. It has been noted that the young and the elderly populations are mostly likely to develop severe illness requiring hospitalisation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, initial laboratory investigations for the patients conducted at the Lautoka Aspen Laboratory indicated that the illness is likely caused by bacteria specifically shigella bacteria, and the Ministry is still awaiting confirmatory results on the specific bacteria. On what the Government and the involved Ministry are doing, Sir, we have carried out environmental and water source investigations which include inspectors collecting water samples which have been sent to CDC Laboratory in Suva for further testing.

The results of the water test show that Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) supplied water from the taps of the household sample is free of bacterial contaminants. The current findings indicate that the WAF water supply is not the cause of the increase in diarrhoeal disease. The Ministry is still awaiting chemical analysis conducted at the Ministry of Agriculture's Koronivia Laboratory for water samples collected by WAF teams.

Our Ba Subdivisional Outbreak Response Team is continuing with the distribution of WASH kits, purification tablets and conducting public health awareness. The Commissioner Western's Office is also working with WAF in the flushing and refilling of tanks.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am from the same community. The community is currently using the water from Naruku, Vatusui, Nacaci, Toge, Balevuto, Nukuloa Backroad, part of Moto, part of Tabataba and the villages of Toge, Balevuto and the settlement of Derelali. They are close to 700 water meters and it is supplied from the Balevuto Water Catchment. The real source is through the terrain of the stream some four kilometres above the catchment.



I had been liaising with the honourable Minister from last week. What I have observed from my recent visitation to the community, the residents are drinking water from outside, especially coming towards Moto, Nadrau, China Koti, Kumkum and the nearby settlements where water is supplied from Waiwai Catchment. Buying bottled water, still not feeling safe. This also happened in 2012, there was an outbreak of Hepatitis A and lot of families and residents were sick. There is close to seven deaths in the community and some people are admitted in Lautoka and also visiting Balevuto Health Centre and the medical doctors around Ba.

What measures are being put in place by the Ministry of Health or in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development and Water Authority of Fiji to cart water into these areas and supply safe drinking water until they found out what is the cause because residents are saying, those who have died have died because of diarrhoea?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- In the case of the four or seven as some of the media have stated who have died from this outbreak, I can assure the Members of this august House that we found out that there are underlying causes.

With regards to the question raised by honourable Pillay, at the moment we have four teams on the ground continuing with their investigations and the awareness part of it. We were working in with close collaboration with WAF and the Director of Water as well together with the NDMO.

Currently on the ground, as I mentioned, we have four teams doing investigation and other research and together with that, yes, water carting is also in the plan. It must be noted that as I had mentioned, we have not found any contaminants from the water supply itself but there has been evidence of contaminants within their own water source (tanks). So those ones, we are working with WAF on flushing, cleaning and refilling.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will ask a question and may be a plea as well to Government. First is, when will the results be available because one of the concerns that we have is the inconsistency in the statements coming from WAF and, of course, the results as highlighted by the Ministry of Health? However, my plea to Government is, please, complete the project. As the honourable Pillay has stated, this is an ongoing issue since 2012. The previous Government has done a lot.

Second is, the lease was under Dayal's and then they have given up part of the lease. The previous Government had constructed a dam, put fencing around the catchment area and the next thing which is incomplete is the treatment plant. We need to connect as well with them, so there is work that needs to be undertaken there. There is allocation too in rural development on high-risk water and sanitation, probably in terms of funding, because this must be a priority so that these people can be assisted.

MR. SPEAKER.- Before you make your reply, honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services, now I see that the honourable Minister for Works wants to make a comment as well to the third supplementary question. Can we agree, first of all, honourable Members, that this has been an ongoing case from 2012 and now.

We have heard from the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services that they have done checks and it is not so much the water, as alluded to by honourable Pillay, coming from the trucks, et cetera, but it is their water source. Their own tanks have been contaminated, et cetera. We have four teams on the ground, as alluded by the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services. So, whilst there is a need to address this agenda issue, can we agree that for the time being, we just leave it to the Government and then we revisit the issue, probably in the next Sitting, so as to

recheck on what has been stated in Parliament that addresses the issue of concern as you have raised, honourable Leader of the Opposition.

That is the only view that I hold from up here, otherwise, it is a never ending one. It is still ongoing, it is a long existing case but somehow or other, it needs to be addressed. I hope you will agree to that.

### Oral Questions

#### Housing Eligibility for Civil Servants (Question No. 90/2023)

HON. J.R. VOCEA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs update Parliament on the current arrangement on housing eligibility for civil servants?

In the past when civil servants were under contracts, the condition was that when they were transferred on promotion to the rural or remote areas, they sign the contract but they are not entitled for housing, even though there are Government quarters available. With the lapse in that contractual arrangement and retirement age has been extended, I am just asking the honourable Prime Minister whether we can review the housing entitlement for civil servants?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Assistant Minister has really answered his own question. During the time of the contract, housing was part of the contract. Now, that the contract has been removed, we have gone back into the Government responsibility of providing quarters or giving housing allowances according to the scales that were in operation in the past. That is, rate per month for what used to be USO1 down to USO4, and so on. These have been revised and will be part of the salary packages given out.

On the actual quarters provision, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government Quarters that were available for occupation by civil servants are now in very, very bad state and we will have to go through a big renovation programme from the Ministry of Works to get them up to a standard for human occupation. But the answer in short is that we have arrangements in the absence of right status, quality of quarters available for senior civil servants. The others will be paid housing allowance in accordance with the scales that have been allowed for in the Budget through the Ministry of Finance.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a supplementary question; I know that a few years back under the current Permanent Secretary for Civil Service, a new policy was introduced where we have gone away with institutional quarters and all Government Quarters are referred to as Government Quarters and, therefore, it is not restricted to only the Ministries involved. Sir, for example, Koronivia is mainly for the Ministry of Agriculture but under that policy, anyone from outside, if a quarters is available, can also apply for that. So, is that policy still being retained or is it in the process of being reviewed?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, those quarters are available, they are Government Quarters and any civil servant being posted into the area would be entitled to occupy those. In lieu of the quarters, they will get their housing allowance.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, I am glad to see that Government is looking into the conditions of the quarters for a lot of the workers whom we have in the outer stations. One of the things that we have had in the past and has also encouraged is trying to assist landowners to have ways of getting income for themselves. So, I am wondering whether the honourable Prime Minister would look into this and whether the Government would consider a scheme of incentivising landowning units in those areas, like we did for subdivisions, to help the landowners build houses that can then be made available for rent because that also might give them an opportunity to save on the capital that they would inject into building quarters for people in the rural areas. I am just wondering if the honourable Prime Minister would look into those sorts of measures to assist I n dealing with this shortage of quality housing for civil servants, especially in rural areas.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the former Minister for his question. As he is aware, earlier this year, we had introduced the concept of Public Private Partnership with the provision of affordable housing, which includes the concept of providing housing for our Government workers. So, it is there, and it is also dovetailed into the allowances for first home owners which is also contained in our Budget.

Proposed Visa-Free Travel to New Zealand and Australia  
(Question No. 91/2023)

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

Can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics update Parliament on the request made by him during the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting on the proposed visa-free travel for Fijians to New Zealand and Australia?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for his question. In fact, this is not a new issue and it has not just been discussed at the recent Forum Economic Ministers Meeting, personally, I have been talking about regional economic integration, which means access to the Forum Member countries in terms of realising the full benefits of not only trade relationships but investment relationships, and the ease with which people from within the Forum Island countries can travel to each other's countries. But, for the first time, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this issue was put on the agenda, if I may say, or as part of the discussion at the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting. In fact, Sir, for the first time, the draft outcome which has been finalised, the Ministers noted that there was a strong desire for visa free travel within the PIF Member countries.

The Ministers were also concerned about how we have talked about regional integration for many years, yet there are a lot of barriers that exist. With respect to visa free travel to Australia and New Zealand, that is obviously part of the overall agenda of free movement of people, goods and services and investment provisions within the different countries.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the call for visa free travel is in that context. However, visa free travel does not mean that people can just buy a ticket and get to Australia and New Zealand and go and live there illegally - it is not that. A lot of our people have great difficulty in not only getting visa to Australia and New Zealand, but also to travel to some of the Pacific Island countries. So, I think it is a good discussion that the Forum Economic Ministers Meeting had and that is something that we will pursue further.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do understand the need for visa free travel. I would like to give a little background before I ask my supplementary question.

The honourable Minister of Finance has emphasised on the urgent need because he wants to facilitate growth of businesses in the geo-economic landscape in the Pacific, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Yet, what we get to see is what had been done with a foreign investor, like Grace Roads. They had been put on red notice.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Ask your question.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- What message is the Coalition Government sending to the foreign investors, the tourists and the people?

Following on from that question, with visa free travel, you have security concerns, immigration challenges, overstays, illegal activities and economic impacts, so what plans and strategies will the honourable Minister of Finance endorse to strike a balance between the security concerns for the Fijian people, while providing international relations and tourism?

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, before we hear from the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, I thought we have very clearly heard from the honourable Deputy Prime Minister that this is something that he had just floated and it is subject to talks and further discussions. Maybe, that is where issues that you have raised, honourable Sharma, could then be addressed but this is just something that he has floated and they are still waiting for a proper response, whether it is a positive or negative response to that suggestion. Do you still want to answer, honourable Deputy Prime Minister?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, I still want to because of the frivolous nature and the ridiculous statement about Grace Road. The honourable Member really does not know what he is talking about. As you have said, Mr. Speaker, Sir, quite correctly, he does not even understand what visa free is and I have just explained. He does not even understand what it means to promote investment.

We have talked about ease of doing business, removing the various taxes, et cetera, but this is the Government which, Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the first time, has set up national committees and is working to remove that.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hogwash!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So, he is talking about hogwash, he was the biggest hogwash.

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- He talked about it earlier but he was responsible for that.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hogwash!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- He was talking about Government Quarters, et cetera, but the worst ever deterioration in Government Quarters happened under their Government.

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Memory lapse!

MR. SPEAKER.- I do not know whether we have got a response for honourable Sharma's question, honourable Deputy Prime Minister. Can this be the last supplementary question, honourable Koya.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I want to thank the honourable Minister of Finance for, once again, meandering into somewhere else, being condescending with our young Members of Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER.- Question, please.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, he should not do that, just let him ask.

Right at the outset, the question was regarding getting an update about the request that he had made, when in his answer, he has failed to tell us what the response was from Australia and New Zealand. He has really said, "We have made a request." We all know about this, it has been ongoing for many years.

Now, the question to the Minister of Finance is, in your approach, did you discuss the fact that we have also had a lot of our young people leaving our shores and how has that being counterbalanced with respect to this particular request being made by you?

MR. SPEAKER.- This is still a suggestion that has been floated and we are going right up to the hills now.

(Laughter)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, you are absolutely right, but let me just explain to honourable Koya. He asked, what is the progress? This is the first time, Sir, that this issue has been on the agenda of the Forum Economic Minister's Meeting. The outcome document specifically mentions the desire from members for visa free travel within the PIF countries - that is the progress itself.

The second thing, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that this is the first time that the Forum Economic Ministers talked about this whole issue of labour mobility, visa free travel, how this is going to impact on the labour situation, so it is all part of a broader discussion in terms of the whole economic integration agenda.

Workplan - Extension of Sealing Works on Roads  
(Question No. 92/2023)

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport update Parliament on the Ministry's workplan on the extension of sealing works on roads in Vanua Levu, Ovalau, Taveuni and Kadavu?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- I thank the honourable Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the seal extension upgrading plan for Vanua Levu includes the Nabouwalu Road from the sealed end, Natewa West Coast Road from Buca Bay Road and Wailevu West Coast Road from Savusavu, with a total distance of approximately 50 kilometres.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the sealed road upgrading proposal will focus on the following sections of roads:

1. Nabouwalu Road from the sealed end at Nabouwalu to Cavaga Junction in Solevu, Bua, covering approximately 10 kilometres in length.
2. Wailevu West Coast Road from Naibalebale T-Junction to Naviavia/Dawara Settlement with a length of approximately 20 kilometres in Cakaudrove.
3. Natewa West Coast Road from Nacavanadi to Korotasere/Sevaci Junction spanning approximately 30 kilometres.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as for Taveuni, we are focusing on the maintenance of the existing road network on the island with some village frontage sealing programme for Vuna Village which also covers Vuna Health Centre, Vuna District School and Kanacea Village on the South-Coastal Road.

Sir, the plan for Ovalau Island is the resurfacing for the main town centre and seal extension for another five kilometres from the end of the seal road. Whereas for Kadavu, we are focusing on the ongoing road project and the routine and periodic maintenance programme for the existing rural road network, to maintain its reachability for the travelling public on these two islands.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I thank the honourable Minister for his reply. My question through you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is in relation to Kadavu - is the sealing of the road within the Vunisea Government Station and the road down to Naluvia Jetty which services the islands of Galoa and all that goes down to Ravitaki, Nabukelevu and going all the way from Sanima to Naceva to Nakasaleka - would that be part of the plan for the sealing in Kadavu?

HON. RO F.Q. TUSAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I focussed on the question which was given to me but I can provide the details of that to the honourable Member later on. I would like to add that we are budgeted separately for communities, villages and school access, and that is something which we will be focusing on as we move forward. Those are some of the areas which have been (I do not want to say the word neglected but I will say it) ...

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Needing attention!

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Say it!

HON. RO F.Q. TUSAWAU.- ... in the last few years..

MR. SPEAKER.- Look, we are all laughing, honourable Minister. This is like the rugby game we watched this morning.

(Laughter)

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, while we are on roads, on Saturday night I was in Tavua, the road leading up to Tavua Hospital is in a very bad shape. Can that be looked into?

MR. SPEAKER.- Is that another new question?

HON. RO F.Q. TUSAWAU.- I have already received that and we have included that in the West Upgrading Programme.

Government Plans - Increase in Departure Tax and VAT  
(Question No. 93/2023)

HON. F.S. KOYA asked the Government, upon notice:

Due to the recent increase in the Departure Tax and VAT on tourism-related products and services, can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation explain how the Government plans to alleviate the potential burden on local communities and businesses?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- If I may, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say how much the people of Fiji are enjoying their Parliament now that question time has come in the morning. Also, for the first time, we allowed an urgent oral question. For eight years we tried in the last Parliament, but it was never allowed. This is democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. Since coming into office, the Coalition Government made it known that our priority was to deal with our debt repayments. That meant some immediate sacrifices because we would not pass the burden on and that is not good governance.

We made known that Government resources were limited and collectively put together a fiscal strategy to support immediate recovery while maintaining a sustainable level of economic growth in the future. A large part of this was to raise revenue and ensure that every tax paying money is spent where it is needed the most - water in taps, better roads, better medical care, education for children.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the last 16 national budgets, the people of Fiji would have to wait for the day of the announcement to know how lives would be impacted. But we are not doing it that way. The honourable Prime Minister, and the Minister for Finance have been open on what to expect in taxes.

I come from the tourism sector, and I know its implications. We have been open and engaged in meaningful dialogue through the Fiscal Review Committee, the National Economic Summit and in the now free and open media.

Departure Tax prior to COVID-19 was \$200, so to be clear, we are looking at gradual re-instatement. But unlike in the past, we are implementing this change in phases from \$100 to \$125 in August 2023 and \$140 from January 2024, so that businesses and the Tourism Industry are not burdened with a drastic change and can make wholesaling and commercial arrangements. This will add a total of \$30 million towards overall tax revenues.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the Value Added Tax system, firstly we have made it simpler by having only two VAT rates and that has been greatly welcomed. Second, the 15 percent VAT is not new.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before COVID-19, the combined taxes in tourism was - VAT 9 percent, Service Turnover Tax (STO) 6 percent and ECAL 10 percent; meaning 25 percent taxes on tourism. So, we are in fact 20 percent lower than what the other side of Parliament had. The Tourism Industry is recovering stronger than anticipated with higher consumption spending and economic momentum. For the last seven months of this year, we have consistently recorded visitor numbers above pre-COVID-19 levels with higher yield. People are spending more in tourism.

Tourism will continue to grow and recover whilst supporting our economy and we know the industry is doing extremely well. To cushion any impacts, we are providing social relief while being mindful, the current measures put us on a better path in the long term. It is only about a financial year - over 90 thousand people on social welfare have increased monthly allowances of 15 percent and 25 percent, \$78.2 million will go towards almost 55 thousand senior citizens. The family assistance scheme is allocated \$45.6 million, we are also investing significantly in our health care

and in education to ease the burden of the vulnerable. We are simplifying the regulatory environment to support businesses and investment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of tourism, we have actually increased the allocation for Tourism Fiji's Marketing Grant. From what it was in 2019 to \$30 million today. This, coupled with Fiji Airways significant investment in marketing and connectivity, means that we will continue to expect a growing industry. Sir, these tax measures are permanently adding \$600 million in additional revenue of about 5 percent of GDP to bring the Government debt situation on a path of sustainability. That is the big picture we should be talking about.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not sure if he has answered that fully, but that is alright. He is used to meandering.

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, in light of the fact that Australia is again going to go through another interest rate rise and New Zealand is somewhat still in recession, the onward bookings with respect to people coming to Fiji, is there a likelihood that we are going to see a downturn specifically because of this particular rise and also that means the suffering of our tourism-based communities?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. What we have today is what we normally term in marketing as "pent-up demand". What we see is that pent-up demand has legs, and we believe that this momentum we see today should go on for another three or four years, but we are not going to rest on that. I am calling for a tourism conference in December to try to understand this phenomena. It is true, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that inflations are up but the pent-up demand for travel supersedes all those needs.

It is a phenomena that we need to get to understand but as we know, Mr. Speaker, there was a survey carried out in Australia some weeks ago and Fiji, by Expedia, one of the biggest consolidators, was top of the ranks in terms of preferred destination to travel to. So, we are sitting pretty comfortably, Mr. Speaker, and we now have a modern aircraft A350. The tourism products are all high class, young fleet, top product so our tourism industry, Mr. Speaker, is sitting comfortably and it is something that has been built over the years, not only during the FijiFirst period.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, honourable Deputy Prime Minister, this increase in VAT brings \$600 million but please also tell the other Deputy Prime Minister and honourable Minister for Finance that he also increased our debt by \$600 million.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question is, you have talked about repayment but what repayment are you going to do this year? Are you confused between debt repayment and refinancing? I want to know if there is a repayment done in this financial year.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance had articulated that very clearly. It is all factored into the macro situation of the country. We already pay our debts with all interest and continued to grow the economy, Mr. Speaker, and tourism will play a big part of that.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, when honourable Professor Prasad was not a Minister....



HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- What is your question?

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- It is a background to the question, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Everything is interconnected. Coalition Government, get used to it!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Question.

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order! He is coming to the question, I think.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- When honourable Professor Prasad was not a Minister, he said, “the price of goods are very high”, and what he does after becoming a Minister, he increases VAT. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister has supported the nuclear waste dump, but the question Fijian people asked is, “where do we go, how do we consume?” *Na idhar ge na udhar ge* and that is what they are saying in our communities.

The question for the honourable Deputy Prime Minister is that local businesses are challenged and suffering from VAT increases because no one is celebrating this new democracy that you talk about - access to finance allows the idea of strengthening local businesses and markets to expand their businesses. But with limited assets to use as collateral, SMEs are seen as high-risk borrowers which means high cost of fees and interest rates from the bank with the increase VAT for them as well. So, what is the Government support to mobilise and optimise access to finance for this locally led businesses in Fiji to survive and go on in accordance with your plans in the tourism sector?

MR. SPEAKER.- That is a mouthful.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- It is a good question but I will answer, Mr. Speaker.

We appear to be living in two different worlds. The world this side is saying there is a boost in confidence in the economy where there is liquidity in the banking system, where people are coming out to borrow money and the banks are lending.

Mr. Speaker, as we have said, the economy will grow this year and tourism is driving it in a huge way and of course benefiting other sectors of the economy. So, I am really at a loss to understand where they are coming from because they appear to be coming from another planet. What we see here in Fiji today is very different – the confidence level, the lack of fear in getting things done. Mr Speaker, this is translating to a confidence to grow the economy.

I would ask them to ask the Governor of the Reserve Bank to give them an update but the bottom-line is that the economy is booming, and it is growing today and will continue in the future, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I intend to adjourn Parliament now for lunch and we will resume when the bell sounds.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.41 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.46 p.m.

### **SPEAKER'S RULING**

#### **Motion on Dumping of Nuclear Wastewater into the Pacific Ocean – Hon. I.B. Seruiratu**

Honourable Members, just before we continue with the next question, I will now address Parliament on the motion by the honourable Leader of the Opposition which is now in the Standing Order.

Given that the honourable Prime Minister made a statement in the morning on the same subject matter earlier, I hereby rule, honourable Members, that the motion by the honourable Leader of the Opposition be omitted from today's Order Paper.

### **QUESTIONS**

#### **Government Plans - Supply, Harvest and Use of Clean Water (Question No. 94/2023)**

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport, please, inform Parliament on Government plans to ensure supply, harvest and use of clean water in rural and remote areas where regular piped water supply is not available?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. The Ministry, through the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF), plans to review, improve on and continue existing rural schemes for the 2023-2024 Financial Year.

The Government, through WAF, plans to continue existing rural schemes - a budget of \$4.2million is allocated for 34 rural projects planned for the year, which will ensure improved access to affordable drinking water for 36 villages benefiting rural population of 4,150 people across 7 provinces nationwide.

This project also includes some Ecological Purification System (EPS) projects that ensure clean drinking water is provided for these communities. The projects are currently under preliminary works and construction will commence by December 2023.

Water Authority of Fiji will also continue with their Rainwater Harvesting Program with a budget of \$0.5million. These services include free delivery of over 200 x 2,500 litre water tanks to these remote and rural communities with arrangements to also build the base for water tanks.

There is an allocation of \$3.1 million to continue to provide water carting services to communities in non-metred areas on a fortnightly basis, and also emergency situations such as we have discussed this morning.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in addition, we have had budgetary constraints and we are also in serious discussion with development partners and CSOs such as Rotary Water to work closely in expanding and hastening rural water services, given the urgent need and high-risk situations we face. This will also come in the sphere of climate financing and that is an area I am focusing on too, the reform within the Ministry in order for us to closely work with our development partners, and to meet their compliance in formatting in terms of proposals and concept notes which will need to be done in order

to meet their requirements as we move forward because at the moment, the need is there but there are budgetary constraints and we need to supplement the national budget with our own efforts to engage development partners, especially in the area of water services.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not just now with the rural and remote areas, ever since the honourable Minister has taken his portfolio, even Suva and Nausori corridor is facing disruptions. Can the honourable Minister actually enlighten when the Viria Water Treatment Plant will be fully operational so that these issues can be resolved?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- It sounds like a new question. It is an ongoing issue from your time up to now. We do acknowledge the work of the previous government in the Viria project, and it is our responsibility to continue it in the most responsible and rational way and that is what we are doing. For Viria, currently they are all going through all the tests and the systems and the pumps and everything is on schedule to October. We will make an announcement on that soon.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, these are ongoing projects, as you know. These projects had been kicked on for the past eight years and we are continuing with this project, and thank you for that. Can the honourable Minister tell this august Parliament what is your plan to see the old projects, which you have already implemented? What are you doing with that? It is okay you are continuing with the new one, but what is your plan for the old projects which we have done, such as the water tanks being given, and the catchment being opened, what are you doing there?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, that is a new question, but as you all know I am very reasonable to do my best in answering your questions. Since I started, one of the big issues regarding, especially, the rural water, is the lack of data. So, when I asked, “Do you have a database of all the villages and the state of their water catchment and that kind of details”, there is none. Currently there is a project under UNICEF, which is compiling that information. That is a consistent way of doing it.

Once we have that, then you could prioritise that according to the needs and the risks in terms of health and all that. Once you prioritise that you can put it in the annual programme and budget for it. Right now, no one handed that over to me. That is the problem and that is the situation with the rural water. There is a whole lot of issues and the way I see it, it boils down to the lack of consistent plan and moving forward in terms of our implementation plan and proper budgeting. We need millions and we do not have that.

That is why I am saying, we need to see what budget we have and complement that with our development partners, and that is what we are currently chasing right now and there have been a lot of good responses. I am looking forward to getting that needs analysis and then matching it with what budget we have, plugging the gap with our funding from our development partners. So, it should look good after 12 months and we should be moving forward on that.

HON. MEMBER.- Too much of a charity.

MR. SPEAKER.- That will be the last supplementary question.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, just a short statement to the honourable Minister.

MR. SPEAKER.- Maybe you ask for his plans, not the government’s plans. You asked for his plan and he has made a reply to that and continuing from where you left off honourable Member.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You can only have one supplementary question.

MR. SPEAKER.- No, no, I will allow it but this will be the last one.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- You did not have a plan when you were there.

HON. V. NATH.- Probably, the Minister is not aware, Mr. Speaker, Sir, he was invited also to the launching of the Household Survey which was done at the Novotel Hotel. You look at this Household Survey and you will get all the data from there.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Sure.

Negative Impacts of Tax Hikes on Sugarcane Farmers  
(Question No. 95/2023)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry inform Parliament if an assessment has been conducted to gauge the potential negative impact of these tax hikes on sugarcane farmers with the recent increase in VAT and other taxes that have raised concerns among sugarcane farmers who are already facing numerous challenges?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have got a 13-page answer to this question.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Read it out!

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Just listen to me.

(Inaudible interjections)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Just listen to me, if I read it out. I would actually hand it over and he could go through it but anyway if you want to listen then listen, shut up! Listen to me.

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, Sir ...

MR. SPEAKER.- Do you want to table that reply or what?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Sir, I can do that but they like my voice. They want me to, if I do not speak...

(Laughter)

MR. SPEAKER.- You listen to the Speaker so he can direct you ...

(Laughter)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Anyway Mr. Speaker, Sir, the sugar industry is something that is very dear to our hearts, honourable Leader of the Opposition. I always meet him during some cocktails, parties, after a few drinks he would say, 'make sure you get me a better price for sugar'. So, I keep on saying to him, 'please support me'.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- (Laughs)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- So, there you go, the Leader of the Opposition now we are friends so you people should also be friends.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reply to honourable Pillay is this, I extend my gratitude to honourable Pillay for the question and honourable Members for the unwavering commitment to addressing the concerns of our esteemed sugarcane farming communities. In response, I am pleased to offer a comprehensive account of the government's proactive measures to mitigate the impact of the recent tax increases and inflation on our sugarcane farmers. The foremost is the imperative to the State that the Coalition Government remains steadfast and the commitment to shielding our sugarcane farmers from the adverse effects of prevailing challenges including the impact of climate change.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I recently conducted Mill Area Committee meetings in Lautoka and Rarawai Mills. This was after a lapse of a decade engaging in a face to face discussion regarding the actual challenges of the farmers on how we can collectively address these. These meetings were attended by growers' representatives, Growers Council representatives, along with the millers representatives, the extension team, Sugar Industry Tribunal and the Ministry of the Sugar Industry.

Interestingly, the concerns expressed by these farmers have not centred around VAT or tax increases. While it is undeniable that there has been a rise in the cost of goods for the general public including farmers, it is noteworthy that sugarcane farmers have not experienced any substantial increase in the production cost meaning that the unit cost and the gross margins remain within the thresholds.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform this august House that enduring challenges faced by the farmers are rooted in the long-standing issues which have not changed in relation to the recent taxation amendments.

These issues include the manual and the operation of century-old mills, inadequate cane access roads, the absence of functional rail network, a labour shortage and fundamentally the lack of visionary approach by the previous government over the past two decades. These factors collectively exert a significant impact on the wellbeing of today's growers. It is not a similar factor.

On the contrary, the VAT increase has allowed the Government to boost its revenue enabling an increase of support for the sugarcane farmers.

In a significant response we have expanded our capital programmes from six in the year 2022-2023 financial year to 13 in this current year for the sugarcane farmers. This proactive and comprehensive approach demonstrates our commitment to addressing the long-standing issues inherited from the previous administration. Be rest-assured this represents only the initial phase of our effort with many more initiatives to be seen in the horizon.

I now talk on some of the measures for the 2023-2024 fiscal year that has been enacted to bolster our sugarcane farmers.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Listen, you will be here for only two weeks after that you will be gone.

(Laughter)

Major input. Look, this guy, come on ....

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Member, he is an honourable Member.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- I am pleased to announce that there has been no substantial rise in the primary input costs for the sugarcane farmers. The Government has maintained subsidies for the vital inputs like fertilisers and weedicides.

Notably, despite the increase in VAT there has been no impact on the cost of fertiliser. Previously, ...

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Listen ...

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, you do not do a running commentary with them.

(Hon. C.J. Singh interjects)

MR. SPEAKER.- No, you listen. That is for the Speaker.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Alright, Sir, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- After all despite the increase in VAT there has been low impact on the cost of fertiliser. Previously, the price at \$20 per bag the farmers will continue to access them at the same rate. This steadfast commitment ensures that our farmers can secure this crucial resources at a consistent price effectively shielding them from the inflationary pressures of the production expenditures.

The Sugar Industry Tribunal (SIT) plays a crucial role in overseeing the harvesting and transportation costs, ensuring that our farmers are protected from unwarranted financial battles in this critical aspects of the sugarcane farming. This regulatory measure promotes fairness and transparency in pricing, offering unequivocal benefits to our farming community.

It is worth noting that while the rate of mechanical harvesting has increased from \$20.61 to \$21.74 resulting in a \$1.13 per tonne increase, it is essential to emphasise that the cost remains below the expenses associated with the hiring of manual labour for harvesting.

Manual labour harvesting typically charges around \$20 to \$25 per tonne.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Well, I will pay \$25 guaranteed price. This is very interesting.

The Government, in its unwavering commitment, has ensured that our farmers receive a minimum of \$85. Allow me to emphasise this point, at the very minimum of \$85 in the pockets of farmers, unlike the previous government - they failed to uphold their promises, ...

(Honourable Opposition Member interjects)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Listen, we pledge that our farmers will indeed receive the full \$85 now and they will receive more than \$85 in the next payment.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- When, how much?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Let me sell the sugar first. We are selling the sugar first, but it will be worth \$85 ...

HON. P.K. BALA.- ... this is not your supermarket ...

HON. C.J. SINGH.- It will be a record under the Prime Ministership.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Listen, do you have a farm?

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the \$85 minimum ...

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Hey, you are not the Speaker, sit down ...

Moreover, our dedicated team at FSC has tirelessly negotiated to secure the most advantaged sugar price and I am glad to announce that the 2023 crop, farmers can expect to receive more than \$85 per tonne.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- How much?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Wait, you will get the answer in the next parliamentary session. Farmers can expect to receive more than \$85, reaffirming and reassuring our commitment that the prosperity and the well-being of farmers will be there. This is based on the world market price of sugar and sugar shows good indication. Now that the major sugar producer, India has banned its export and kept the export for only 6.1 million tonnes compared to 11.1 million tonnes in the previous years so that gives an advantage to us as a small producer, that we can sell our sugar at a better price in the world market.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Who wrote your speech?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- I wrote my own speech. You have not completed your degree, you bloody small kid ....

(Laughter)

Turning our attention to the budgetary support and direct assessment measures. Sugar Cane Development and Farmers Assistance support sugarcane farm owners with the cane planting grant to promote cane planting.

(Inaudible interjections)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- If you want to listen, listen, otherwise I'll sit down. When I am speaking, then you keep quiet.

To promote cane planting and innovate the financial institutions a stage of the first planting, the People's Coalition Government has increased the cane planting grant to \$5 million. The Government has increased the cane planting grant. For a hectare from \$1,500 to \$1,875; a 25 percent increase. This is deemed as the highest cane planting grant of all the years in the history of this sugarcane industry. We have listened to the farmers ...

HON. P.K. BALA.- Really...

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Yes, and increase this grant to mitigate the rising cost because the deteriorating condition of the soil, it has been acidic. We have also introduced the application of lime with the introduction of 425 hectare on the top of increasing of the grant for the land preparation and cane planting. Therefore, the overall rate per hectare now is 2,300 per hectare inclusive of lime application with slight increase of price of weedicides. We have also increased subsidy from 20 percent for the last year to 30 percent this year.

The in-field drainage, Mr. Speaker, Sir, have an allocation of \$5.5 million has been specifically earmarked for the enhancement of the drainage system with full funding source from grants. It is discouraging that our farmers appeals have been unanswered for far too long, however Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have acted swiftly precisely to introduce a link programme aimed at supporting our sugarcane farmers. This initiative guarantees heightened production and productivity while minimising the adverse effects of natural disasters and associated mitigation expenses. There is also work in progress to reinstate the drainage board.

Cane Access Roads, Mr. Speaker, an additional \$2 million has been earmarked to enhance the cane access roads and crossings, ensuring the cane excess roads remain in accessible conditions.

Manual Harvesting Subsidy, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the introduction of a subsidy for manual harvesting represents a strategic and targeted approach by the Government to incentivise labour-intensive harvesting methods within the sugarcane industry. This subsidy is a proactive measure designed to address specific challenges faced by the farmers and the sector as a whole.

Production based incentive, Mr. Speaker Sir, the establishment of a \$1 million incentive programme for higher production represents a significant commitment by the Government to encourage and reward increased sugar cane yields. This programme is designed to benefit both individual farmers and the sugar industry as whole by addressing various aspects of cane production.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would also draw attention to the fact that the sugar industry is not there alone. Out of 10,800 active cane growers, 85 percent to 90 percent of them practise polyculture (not only sugarcane). They manage and live in and around farming enterprises (rice, dairy, horticulture, aquaculture, et cetera) that has overflows, positive externalities and spillovers from these non-sugar agricultural enterprises including fisheries and forestry. For example, most sugarcane farmers would be milking cows and having chicken which is called "*jungle murgi*" running around the compound, small plot with pulses and vegetables. Non sugar agriculture, forestry and fisheries have also received budgetary support that spills over sugar sector as well.

Revisiting the effect of VAT and tax increases, it is essential to emphasize that our sugarcane farmers currently face minimal impacts, thanks the comprehensive support safety net and subsidies outlined in the 2023 -2024 National Budget.



Under the current taxation policy framework, income up to \$30,000 is exempted from tax, and most of the farmers are below that threshold. The inflation as per the Reserve Bank of Fiji's August 2023 Economic Reports states an average annual inflation rate in the first seven months of 2023 stands at 1.3 percent. It is also to be added that zero VAT is on basic food items (21 of them) and prescribed medicine have zero VAT, so again that is no direct negative impact.

Also, senior citizens in farming communities got social welfare allowances increased too. However, Mr. Speaker, there are always positive and negative factors to the changes in the tax rates – the increase in the whole landscape of taxation has increased the prices of other items.

While there may be inevitable gradual increases in production costs due to general inflation in the coming days ahead, the Coalition Government has diligently taken steps to mitigate the immediate pressure to the sugarcane farmers in most of the areas as I have just outlined, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. C. J. SINGH.- *Kon bole. Suno Suno chhota ladka.*

Rest assured, the Government remains unwavering in its commitment to the well-being and prosperity of our sugarcane farmers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have implemented a wide array of initiatives and subsidies to ensure that they do not bear the full brunt of recent economic challenges.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Last page.

HON. C.J. SINGH .- Yes.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Finally.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Do you want to read it or shall I read it?

I want to assure this august House that as a result, there has been no immediate adverse impact on cane production, and our sugarcane farmers continues to be indispensable contributors to our nation's economic sector and overall economy that brings in \$200 million revenue to our economy per year on average. Again, honourable Pillay, your question was very valuable, and I have given full information about our sugar industry and where we stand.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the cost of production, the cost of harvesting has increased, apart from the tax hike, duty and other things. There is a huge cost that has increased....

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- What is your question?

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- *Areh*, listen, listen!

HON. V. PILLAY.- And also during times when the mills are not performing, there is also extra cost to farmers to assist the labourers in terms of their food and other things. Maybe the honourable Minister is very lucky, he has a team...

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- What is the question?

HON. V. PILLAY.- ...who harvested his burnt cane for \$25 a tonne. But the price, the cost has gone up to \$30 and above and all the hidden costs. My question is, when will the Ministry of

Sugar, through the Government, increase the guaranteed price?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, I think this is the problem.

HON. V. PILLAY.- I asked about the guaranteed price.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- The problem with the Member who was asking the question, I said, we are getting a better price of sugar this year and I will inform Parliament in the next sitting.

HON. J. USAMATE.- When?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- In the next sitting.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. C.J. SINGH.- There is a calendar of Parliament sittings, read that. The point is this, I will announce the price. It will be much better, you will be happy and I will be happy. As a farmer you will be happy.

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, just a question to the honourable Minister, I was with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts a few weeks ago down in the West. I noted a couple of ways in which they run their farming schemes, we have cooperatives, there is a group of ladies (widows) somewhere in Lautoka, headed by a widow. I think there is another group of retirees. My question is, I think you are talking about the well-being of these farmers. How do you treat these groups in terms of assistance and also looking after their welfare?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Honourable Member, as much as it is a new question but I will try to answer that. We are talking through the Growers Council. The Grower's Council is there now to assist any new owner that want to come into the farms that will assist the current position of the current farmers. If they need assistance, they can directly come to Ministry of Sugar, and we will facilitate.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, whoever wrote the speech did a wonderful job, so thank you honourable Minister. The question was quite clear, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we were talking about VAT and the impact it had on farmers. Farmers are the backbone of our nation's economy, unfortunately, it seems the Minister or the Ministry's lost, but ...

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- What is the question?

HON. K.K. LAL.- ... the VAT increase has impacted everyone including our farmers. Those who have contacted us have said that VAT has really affected them, the cost of goods has gone up.

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Question!

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the supplementary question that I have is, has the Ministry considered any measures to alleviate the financial burden imposed by the tax hike on sugarcane farmers such as subsidies and other exemptions?

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, I think some of them were not listening to my speech. Everything is here, I will give you a copy, then you can read it. I actually answered you, everything is here. You are just trying to waste the time of this Parliament.

Religious Education Teachers  
(Question No. 96/2023)

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Education inform Parliament on the plans to include specialised religious education teachers in its remuneration and recognition programmes, considering the important role they play in promoting religious and moral education in our school?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question given the important role that the School Chaplains play in the education of our children. The Chaplaincy Policy was ideally hoped to be reinstated in the third term of 2023.

However, the Ministry recognised the need to consult widely, and the Ministry is doing this with all faith-based organisations, school management, et cetera, and other stakeholders, given that the majority of the schools in Fiji are managed and owned by faith-based organisations and community management. Given the cost sharing arrangement that we will have to have in place.

The work is still work in progress which we hope to complete and have this policy in place very soon, hopefully before the end of the school term. Some of the concerns and issues that have been identified regarding the reinstatement of School Chaplains, that they will be subject to compliance to all relevant legislations such as the Fiji Teachers Registration Authority and also the 2020 Financial Handbook exempts payment of chaplains for non-Government schools.

In some of the Government schools, only eight out of the eleven Government schools have been paid in previous arrangements for school chaplaincy. In short, the work is still in progress, we are trying to formalise the work to ensure that it goes through the proper authority and then to Cabinet.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2023, the honourable Minister said that farmers have gone from bad to worse and they are lazy. So, I would just like to correct him. That is what you have said about the farmers of Fiji, it is in the *Fiji Times*.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when the Coalition Government came to power, there were rumours that in Government offices people would sprinkle holy water, salt and even powder.

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. K.K. LAL.- Listen, listen!

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Now, in a strategic or operational context, how will the Ministry of Education, I know it is in the process, establish frameworks and monitor and assess the risks like schools promoting a particular religion over others for those children or other children may be pressured to confirm to a particular belief?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that the consultation is in progress, taking into consideration the views of the other faith-based organisations that manage the schools.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Ministry will ensure that all the students are offered religious education, no one is left behind.

HON. P. TIKODUADUA.- You cannot force it.

HON. H. CHAND.- My question is, how many religious education teachers are there in primary and secondary and what is the budget for this programme?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable Member is asking statistics which can be provided if its put in as a written question.

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as alluded to by the honourable Minister the Government will take charge of the religious teachers. Is the Government going to fund the training of these religious teachers, because as you know, most of the schools are run by faith-based organisations? These organisations are not that well off, so is the Government going to assist in funding for the training of these teachers?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, just a clarification, religious chaplaincy have always been funded by the Government right up to 2014 to 2017 and in the 2020 Financial Management Handbook, that had been taken away. This is something that we are trying to reintroduce and is part of the consultation process.

#### Written Questions

##### Civil Servants - Study Leave Overseas (Question No. 97/2023)

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs update Parliament on the number of civil servants who are currently on study leave overseas:

- (a) how many are on study leave with pay and how many are on study leave without pay; and
- (b) how many have had their contracts terminated whilst on study leave between 2014 to 2022?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my written response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

##### Grant of State Land Lease (Question No. 98/2023)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA asked the Government, upon notice.

Can the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources inform Parliament of the grant of state land lease for the period 2014 to 2022 for the following:

- (a) the number of applicants being issued Notice of Approval of Lease;
- (b) the number of proper leases issued upon these Notices of Approval of Lease;
- (c) the cause of delay in processing proper leases pending Notice of Approval of Lease;
- (d) what steps are being taken to accelerate this process for the purpose of ease of doing business and in boosting our resource-based sectors; and

- (e) the number of leases being declined (if any) upon the issuance of Notice of Approval of Lease and the reasons for the same?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

Statistics on Shortage of Qualified Teachers  
(Question No. 99/2023)

HON. H. CHAND asked the Government, upon notice.

As a result of the shortage of qualified teachers in the Early Childhood Education, Primary Schools and Special Needs Schools, can the honourable Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts provide the following information to Parliament:

- (a) total roll of schools for the current year;
- (b) provide statistics on the number of teachers required per school;
- (c) number of teachers that had resigned; and
- (d) number of vacancies for Early Childhood Education, Primary Schools and Special Needs Schools?

<sup>1</sup> HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am happy to table my response now in accordance with Standing Order (45)(5).

Community Sports Associations  
(Question No. 100/2023)

HON. A.N. TUICOLO asked the Government, upon notice:

With the establishment of the Fiji National Sports Commission Act 2013, can the honourable Minister for Youth and Sports provide the following:

- (a) how many Communities Sports Associations have been registered with the Fiji National Sports Commission to date;
- (b) how many Communities Sports Associations are currently active or non-active to date in the rural, maritime, urban and peri-urban areas;
- (c) will the Fiji National Sports Commission be introducing any new sports to these communities and will these sports continue to promote equality and inclusivity regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religious backgrounds and physical abilities; and
- (d) do the community sports outreach programmes cover all four Divisions?

<sup>2</sup> HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to table my written response as per Standing Order 45.

MR. SPEAKER.- I must commend the two Government Ministers for the way they responded to the Written Questions, it is very quick.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 99/2023 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education under Standing Order 45(3) is appended as Annexure I.

<sup>2</sup> Reply to Written Question No. 100/2023 tabled by the honourable Minister for Youth and Sports under Standing Order 45(3) is appended as Annexure II.

Projects and Programmes - 2022-2023 WAF Budget  
(Question No. 101/2023)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport provide the following:

- (a) a detailed breakdown of the list of projects and programmes that will be implemented to utilise the budget of Water Authority of Fiji for 2023 to 2024; and
- (b) the targeted cost of each programme and project, together with planned completion dates?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later sitting day as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please, take note that there will be five Bills for consideration and we will deal with them progressively. I now call upon the honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to move his motion.

**HIGH COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023**

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the –

- (a) High Court (Amendment) Bill 2023 (Bill No. 20/2023), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2023, but that one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, at this juncture, I will only speak as to why Parliament must consider the High Court (Amendment) Bill 2023 without delay under Standing Order 51.

It is hoped that honourable Members of this august Parliament will also limit their contributions, if any, to the motion, and any substantive contributions to the merits of the Bill shall be made during the debate of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the High Court Act 1875 provides for the establishment of the High Court of Justice for Fiji. In 2021, the Act and the Magistrates Court Act 1944 were amended to establish the Anti-Corruption Division of the High Court and the Anti-Corruption Division of the Magistrates Court respectively.

However, the amendments in 2021 did not provide any specific improvement to the administration for dealing with anti-corruption matters which, in some instances, were dealt with outside the respective Anti-Corruption Divisions, such as proceedings in the outer islands. The Bill,

therefore, seeks to amend the Act to disestablish the Anti-Corruption Division of the High Court and the Anti-Corruption Division of the Magistrates Court.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, consultations were held with the Office of the Chief-Registrar, the Office of the Solicitor-General and public consultations were also held in Suva, Nadi and Labasa.

Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the short title and commencement. If passed by Parliament, the amending legislation will come into force on a date appointed by the Minister by notice in the Gazette.

Clause 2 of the Bill amends the Act by deleting Part 6B in relation to the establishment of the Anti-Corruption of the High Court.

Clause 3 of the Bill, consequently, amends the Magistrates Court Act 1944 by deleting Part 8B in relation to the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Division of the Magistrates Court.

Clause 4 of the Bill provides for the transitional provisions for any pending proceedings instituted by the Commissioner of the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption in the Anti-Corruption Divisions of the Magistrates Court, as well as the High Court, prior to the commencement of the amending legislation to be transferred to the Magistrates Court or High Court, as the case may be.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, given the important implications of our legal system, it is submitted that this warrants the urgent consideration of the Bill by Parliament and, therefore, the Bill must be considered without delay.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. At the end of the debate, we still have the Right of Reply from the mover.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, issues that are taken up under Standing Order 51 are normally done if it is something that is quite simple to change, or if there is something urgent.

In the address that was done by the honourable Attorney-General, there is no message that was made that makes that clear. There does not seem to be anything urgent about this to make this come under Standing Order 51 and over and above that, of course, we always object. There are so many on that side of Parliament who always objected to the use of Standing Order 51.

As I had said at the beginning of this session, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I was flabbergasted when they did that with the very first Bill they brought into this Chamber. And that I had said right at the beginning is the definition of hypocrisy, when you condemn something continually and at the very first thing that you do you do exactly the thing that you condemn. On that basis, we are not concurrence with this idea that this Bill should be brought through Standing Order 51.

MR. SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Usamate, for your comments and concern. As you had rightly said, most Members on this side of Parliament on the Government side, had always questioned the motives behind Standing Order 51 – every time a Bill that came before the House was introduced under Standing Order 51 then. So, it is just the change of sides here, but the processes are still the same, honourable Usamate.

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. SPEAKER. – Order, order!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, just one line. Honourable Minister of Finance, imitation is the highest form of flattering.

(Laughter)

MR. SPEAKER.- I now call on the honourable Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would be repeating what I have said earlier. We are here to correct some of the injustices, the same process that was used, by now the other side. The fact is, we are taking away what was created in 2021, for the interest of justice.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Change the Attorney-General. Honourable Vosarogo is better, he should be the Attorney-General.

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- For the better administration of justice, it is urgent that this is debated in this session of Parliament.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	29
Noes	-	25
Not Voted	-	1

Motion agreed to.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023**

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the -

- (a) Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2023 (Bill No. 21/2023), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) Bill must debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 2023, but that one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the Right of Reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2023 seeks to amend the Local Government Act 1972, to increase the retirement age of officers appointed to Municipal Councils from 55 years to 60 years. Increasing the retirement age of officers appointed to Municipal Councils aligns with the Government's policy on retirement and the retirement age of civil servants.

Furthermore, the Bill seeks to amend the Act to remove the requirement of calculating interest on overdue rates using the compound interest method. It also removes the interest rate as this would



be prescribed by regulations, moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Bill is urgent for Government and must be considered without delay as Cabinet endorsed the change in retirement age to officers and servants of Local Government in March and consultations of the same has been concluded. There have been extensive consultations with the Ministry of Local Government and the Office of the Solicitor-General. The Ministry assisted the Office of the Solicitor-General to carry out public consultations in Suva, Nasinu, Nausori, Lami, Nadi, Lautoka, Labasa and Savusavu.

Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the short title and commencement. If passed by Parliament, the amending the legislation will come into force on a date appointed by the Minister by notice in the Gazette.

Clause 2 of the Bill amends section 35 of the Act to increase the retirement age of officers appointed to Municipal Councils from 55 years to 60 years.

Clause 3 of the Bill deletes section 35 of the Act which is obsolete, given that the amendment in section 35 of the Act to the retirement age.

Clause 4 of the Bill clarifies the amendment made to section 35 of the Act and provides that the change in retirement age from 55 years to 60 years will not apply to those who have already turned 55 years old before the commencement of the amending legislation.

Clause 5 of the Bill amends section 78 of the Act to remove that interest rate of 11 percent charged on overdue rates and provides that such rates of interest will be prescribed by regulations. The amendment also removes the requirement for overdue rates to be calculated using the compound interest method.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion and as usual, at the end of the debate, we will have the Right of Reply from the mover.

Honourable Members, there being no interest shown from the Opposition to take the floor on the debate, I now call on the Attorney-General to speak in reply.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Sir, it is very important that this motion is moved forward and the Bill is debated to synchronise the policy of Government in terms of the retirement age so that members or employees of the Local Government are not prejudiced by this law being delayed any further.

MR. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

### **DRAINAGE (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023**

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the –

(a) Drainage (Amendment) Bill 2023 (Bill No. 22/2023), be considered by Parliament without

- delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
  - (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
  - (d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2023, but that one hour be given to debate on the Bill, with the Right of Reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Drainage Act 1961 was enacted in 1961 and provides for the execution of drainage works, among other things.

The Act is administered by the Ministry of Waterways which was established in 2017 to address to growing threat of flooding in Fijian communities. In 2018, the Act was amended to allow the Ministry to assume the responsibility for drainage systems and the functions of drainage boards under the Act.

Regrettably, adequate consultation and planning have not been undertaken prior to the removal of the Drainage Boards. Consequently, there has been a noticeable decline in the overall production of sugarcane, as well as non-sugar commodities, produced from the drainage scheme areas which attributed to the transfer of the responsibilities of drainage systems to the Ministry.

It is anticipated, therefore, that the establishment of drainage boards will improve the service and maintenance of drainage scheme areas whilst contributing towards the increase in the production of sugar and non-sugar commodities produced in those areas.

The Drainage (Amendment) Bill 2023 accordingly seeks to amend the Act to revert the responsibility of drainage systems to the drainage boards.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Bill is urgent for the Government, given that the Ministry of Waterways have put in plans in this financial year for the Drainage Boards to undertake the responsibility of drainage systems and shift that burden from the Ministry.

There have been comprehensive consultations with the Office of the Solicitor-General, the Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, Ministry of Local Government, Municipal Councils, the Ministry of Sugar and the Sugarcane Growers Council.

Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the short title and commencement. If passed by Parliament, the amending legislation will come into force on a date or dates appointed by the Minister by notice in the Gazette.

Clause 2 of the Bill amends section 2 of the Act by inserting the definitions of “Board” and “drainage area”.

Clause 3 of the Bill amends the Act by inserting new sections 3, 4 and 5 to -

- (a) provide for the declaration of drainage areas, and related matters;
- (b) provide for boards and enable such boards to appoint officers to carry out functions under the Act and to remunerate such officers; and
- (c) provide for the quorum and proceedings of the meetings of the drainage boards.

Clause 4 of the Bill amends section 8 of the Act to replace references made to the “Ministry” with the “Board”.

Clause 5 of the Bill amends section 9 of the Act to replace references made to the “Permanent Secretary” with the “Board”.

Clause 6 of the Bill amends the Act to include boards in the limitation of liability provision which is currently only extended to officers of the Ministry and the Permanent Secretary.

Clause 7 of the Bill amends the Act by inserting section 11 to establish a drainage fund where all grants of money made to a board will be paid.

Clauses 8 and 9 of the Bill amend sections 20 and 21 of the Act, respectively, to replace references made to the “Permanent Secretary” with the “Board”.

Clause 10 of the Bill deletes sections 24, 25, 26, 27 and 30 of the Act which provided for the transition of drainage responsibilities from boards to the Ministry in 2018, and are now obsolete

I fully commend this Bill to Parliament.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, once again, we on this side of Parliament really do not see why there is a necessity to do this through Standing Order 51. At the end of the day, I think for quite a substantial amount of time, Government when they were in Opposition and even now says consultation, consultation, consultation is required with respect to any Bills, et cetera, that come before Parliament.

The honourable Minister and Attorney-General has actually just said that there was extensive consultation but the list that he just read out is really just consultation between inter-government ministries - there is no consultation between the public. The only people outside (which I recall he said) was the Sugarcane Growers Council but there has been no consultation. It would seem that this is merely just a systematic dismantling of what we had done earlier, to put back what was there before. With respect to the substantive matter within the actual Bill that has been put forward, the material that is there was being taken care of by the Ministry of Waterways.

In any event, Sir, we are very practical about what we do, and you will see that tomorrow. We are very practical about how we approach this. If you want to use Standing Order 51 we do not have an objection sometimes when it is absolutely necessary for you to do so. He has not for one single moment, in his five minutes of speaking, shown the urgency with which this requires to go through Standing Order 51. This is an important area of our economy, Sir, and it does require consultation. His entire list was just the Office of the Solicitor-General, etc, etc - all the Government bodies; so we object to it. We all do on this side of Parliament, and I understand the honourable Leader of the Opposition also needs to say some things.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to briefly speak on the use and abuse of Standing Order 51. They are now nine months in Government. You very well understand that they used to criticise us badly when we were in government on the use and abuse of Standing Order 51, but what difference have they brought into this august Parliament when they are in Government?

If I remember correctly, not a single Bill that they have brought into this august Parliament in the last nine months, have come through the proper channel rather than Standing Order 51. Mr. Speaker, Sir, they all know what they uttered during the campaign. I say that again - apart from the depth, this is one area they concentrated on - the use and abuse of Standing Order 51.

What difference have you brought into Parliament when you are now in Government? Nothing! You hoodwinked and lied to the people. You should be ashamed of yourselves! That is exactly my point. We will talk about the substantive Bill on Thursday, but it is the use and abuse of Standing Order 51, that we oppose.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will just sum up everything in one line just as the honourable Koya says. We have consulted, and I, as the Minister for Sugar, have consulted. The farmers are crying. Second line is this - you listen, the consultation was very extensive. The point is this, you do not want to listen. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we consulted the farmers and the farmers are so unhappy about the drainage system, and this Bill is very appropriate at the right time.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, just a very quick response to the honourable Leader of the Opposition. He is talking about abuse and misuse of Standing Order 51 and he is saying nothing has changed.

This government, over the last so many sittings of Parliament that we have had, they have had more respect they ever imagined that they would give to the Opposition in the last eight years. We were terrorised sitting in the Opposition because all of them, including the honourable Leader of the Opposition, was sitting there gulping all the abuse and misuse of the Standing Order 51 that we saw over the eight years. What we are doing with this urgent Bill is that, in the last 15 years, decrees, Standing Order 51, Bills that were brought into Parliament and those before, we are now looking at these very carefully and in a very short period of time we want to change some of this.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Hogwash.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- This Drainage Bill is coming after the budget allocation. Honourable Singh is 100 percent correct. You look at the drainage system in the country today - the worst ever disaster that we have seen under that FijiFirst Government...

(Inaudible interjections)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- and here, the honourable Leader of the Opposition who was once the Minister for Agriculture, knows that. This is an urgent Bill. We want to get down to making sure that there is drainage work done. We do not want to delay it for the next three or four months because the budget was passed in July, 2023, came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2023 and we are in September. It makes sense to have this done quickly and move ahead and fix the drains.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute on the motion at hand. In the last Parliament, the previous government totally misused Standing Order 51, totally - 100 percent. In 2014 – the total Bills passed under Standing Order 51 was 16; in 2015 it was 30 out of 32; in 2017 it was 40 out of 41; 2019 – 29 out of 30 Bills passed under SO 51; in 2020 - 51 Bills passed under SO 51 out of 52, and in 2021 – all 36 Bills passed under SO 51.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Yours is 100 percent.

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- I mean 99 percent of the Bills they brought up was under Standing Order 51.

HON. K.K. LAL.- That is copy and paste.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- The data evidence is there.

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- And here they have the audacity to tell us not to use it. These are urgent issues for the Drainage Bill - do any of you come from Rewa? If you go there, we have huge issues with the drainage not only the drainage but also dredging. So, with climate change it is a huge threat and we need to get this through as soon as possible.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will not speak for long but the only point that I want to make is the government has been there for nine months. Name one Bill that you have referred to the Standing Committee? Just one Bill.

(Laughter)

The point that I am making here is, we never said that we will not use Standing Order 51. We were using Standing Order 51 because the provision was there but it is the government when they were in Opposition the kept on hammering that Standing Order 51 is not the way forward. In fact they used that in their campaign but what are they doing today? They are doing the opposite, they are using Standing Order 51.

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- So, in other words they are hoodwinking the public by saying that we will not use Standing Order 51 and that is precisely what they are doing. We are just pointing that point to you. That is all.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is precisely the point. When we were in government, we never said to stop using Standing Order 51 but they did. The honourable Prime Minister said it, the honourable Deputy Prime Minister Professor Biman Prasad said it, Deputy Prime Minister Gavoka said it, the honourable Tuisawau said it, the honourable Lynda Tabuya said it, the honourable Pio Tikoduadua said it, the honourable Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu said it. Who else was here? The honourable Jese Saukuru said it, and also the honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, they said do not use it. They said it was important not to use it because it denies democracy in getting it to be discussed in this Parliament. This is the point. My apologies Mr. Speaker, Sir, all of you said it.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, we did not

HON. J. USAMATE.- I am not going to call you hypocrites but when someone says something and does the opposite that is hypocrisy. I am not calling you hypocrites but that is hypocrisy.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Hogwash!

MR. SPEAKER.- I now call on the honourable Attorney-General to speak in reply. Speaking in reply to the motion on Standing Order 51. Let us hope we are all clear on that.

HON. S.D. TURAGA. - Mr. Speaker, I would re-state what I said earlier - *ceuta mada mai na malamala mai na matamudou*,

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU. - *E rau duidui na malamala kei na lasu*.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, 48 Bills last year. This Bill initially came from the Ministry of Agriculture and of course you have to give credit to the Minister and his Assistant Minister because they started off their career there. They want to put this thing right.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Walk the talk.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- We are fixing the problem they did. It needs to be done because of the sugar industry. I can recall in our last Parliament session the Leader of Opposition - I do not know whether it was in the House or if it was casual conversation, but he had said that there should be a Drainage Board, yet today he says something else. It is Government policy so that we can have some transparency and clarity into agriculture. That is why we need a Drainage Board to be set up.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER. - Honourable Members, we are trying to clear some housekeeping issues because the hour on the clock is after 4.00 p.m. For the purpose of complying with Standing Orders with respect to sitting time, I now call upon the Leader of Government in Parliament the honourable Lynda Tabuya to move the suspension motion.

### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

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

Under Standing Order 6 that so much of Standing Order 23(1) be suspended to allow Parliament to sit beyond 4.30 p.m. today to complete the remaining items listed on today's Order Paper.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU. - Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT. - Mr. Speaker, we still have two Bills to be considered I believe by the honourable Attorney-General as well as four motions for debate under Schedule No. 3. So, to sit beyond 4.30 p.m. would accommodate the remaining items for the House.

MR. SPEAKER. - Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on this motion, if any?

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT. - Mr. Speaker, I have nothing further to add.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER. - Honourable Members, I intend to adjourn Parliament for afternoon tea

before we resume and take care of all outstanding issues that are to be addressed today. We will resume when the bell is sounded.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.11 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 4.49 p.m.

### **STATE LANDS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2023**

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing 51, I move:

That the –

- (a) State Land (Amendment) Bill 2023 (Bill No. 23/2023), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 but that one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion,

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the State Lands Act 1945 provides for the administration of State land. In 2021, section 13 of the Act was amended by the State Lands (Budget Amendment) Act 2021 (commonly referred to as 21 Amendment Act) to remove the requirement of pinning consent from the Director of Lands for any mortgage, charge, pledge, caveat or for any such lease to be dealt with by any court of law or other process of any court of law.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the 2021 Amendment Act also amended Section 13 of the Act to provide the consent of the Director and can only be refused when there is a breach of any lease condition or where such application to deal with the land is not in accordance with any law. The 2021 Amendment Act came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2021.

In 2022, section 16 of the Act was amended by the State Land (Amendment) Act 2022 to empower the Director to re-enter land and cancel land lease, licence or approve any notice of lease in instance where occupants of the land have as a result of dispossession of land or due to political upheaval or cancellation or non-renewal of the leases or licenses resort to seek refuge on the land for which they were not lessees under the Act.

In these instances, the lessees permitted such persons to use the land, it did not obtain the consent of the Director of Lands making the arrangement unlawful under the Act. Therefore, the Director may re-enter land and cancel the lease, lessors who approve the notice of lease.

Due to the challenges and difficulties faced as a result of the amendments, the State Land (Amendment) Bill 2023 seeks to amend the Act to remove some of the amendments made by the 2021 Amendment Act and the 2022 Amendment Act.

Consultations were held with the Office of the Solicitor-General and of course with the Office of the Ministry of Lands. Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the short title and commencement if passed by Parliament, the main legislation will come into force on a date appointed by the Minister by notice in the gazette.

Clause 2 of the Bill amends section 13 of the Act by deleting sub-section 1(a) and sub-section 6 as substituting section 1. Clause 3 of the Bill amends the Act by inserting a new section 38 to provide for the transitional provision and give clarity to any application for any mortgage, charge, pledge, caveat or for any such lease to be dealt with by any court of law, that has been made under



Section 13 of the Act on or after 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2021 and before the commencement of the State Land (Amendment) Act 2023.

Clause 4 of the Bill amends Section 16 of the Act to delete sub-sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Clause 5 of the Bill amends the Act by consequently amending the State Land, leases and licence regulation 1980 to remove part of the regulations and to clarify that any pending application before the Committee established under part 4 of the regulation prior to the commencement of the many legislations must be dealt with in accordance with that.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I recommend that the Bill be debated upon on Thursday.

MR. SPEAKER.- The floor is now open for debate on the motion. At the end of the day as usual, we will have the Right of Reply from the mover.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think the standard response to this is again the use of “Order 51”, I think enough has been said on it, but we do raise objection to it being used in Parliament time and time again without actual reason and without them showing the actual hurry as required with respect to these particular amendments. Just in short, we do object the use of “Order 51”.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there will be no right of reply. I have articulated the urgency of this matter. This is also consequential to the earlier Bill which now enact in relation to iTaukei Land.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	29
Noes	-	25
Not voted	-	1

Motion agreed to.

### **HIGHER SALARIES COMMISSION BILL 2023**

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the –

- (a) Higher Salaries Commission Bill 2023 (Bill No. 24/2023), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) Bill must be tabled, debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 but that one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

HON. L. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the twelfth Bill that was introduced by the Coalition Government under Standing Order 51.

The Higher Salaries Commission was previously established in 1983 under the Higher

Salaries Commission Act to consider and determine the salaries of Chief Executive Officers of publicly owned corporations and bodies, Government-controlled companies, Permanent Secretaries and the Chief Executive Officers of every city, town and District Council.

In 2011, the Highest Salaries Commission Act (Cap 2A), together with its subsidiary legislation was repealed by the Higher Salaries Act 2011. As a result, the Commission established pursuant to the Higher Salaries Commission Act was abolished.

Pursuant to the Higher Salaries Act 2011, the salaries which used to be considered and determined by the Commission is to be determined, as the case may be, by a Minister, authority or body prescribed under written law which appoints or has authority over any such board, corporation, Government controlled company, authority or body, following the approval of the Minister responsible for public enterprises and the Prime Minister.

The consensus of Cabinet is that there must be a central coordination mechanism for salaries of top executive positions in boards, corporations, authority or body or any Government controlled company.

Due to the abolishment of the Commission, the determination of salaries of top executives of prescribed bodies was left to the responsibility of boards and ministers. This has resulted in a lack of coordination or supervision by any central authority.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Bill is urgent for the Government and must be considered without delay so that the process for determination of salaries can be streamlined and supervised by a central authority. Therefore, the Higher Salaries Commission Bill, 2023 will re-establish the Higher Salaries Commission and guide the determination of salaries of top executive positions of prescribed bodies.

Consultations were held with the Ministry of Civil Service, the Ministry of Public Enterprises and the Office of the Solicitor-General.

Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the short title and commencement. If passed by Parliament, the Act will come into force on a date or day that is appointed by the Minister by notice in the Gazette.

Clause 2 of the Bill provides for the definitions of terms used throughout the Bill.

Clause 3 of the Bill establishes the Higher Salaries Commission and provides for the composition of the Commission.

Clause 4 of the Bill provides the criteria used to determine the eligibility for the appointment of a member of the Commission.

Clause 5 of the Bill provides how vacancies in the Commission are to be filled.

Clause 6 of the Bill stipulates the meeting requirements of the Commission.

Clause 7 of the Bill outlines the functions of the Commission.

Clause 8 of the Bill outlines the powers of the Commission.

Clause 9 of the Bill provides for the appointment of officers and employees including temporary casual officers and employees of the Commission.

Clause 10 of the Bill authorises the Commission to issue guidelines and directions for the performance of the Commission's functions.

Clause 11 of the Bill states that the Commission may delegate to its officers as it thinks fit any of its functions and powers except the powers to further delegate.

Clause 12 of the Bill provides for the disclosure of conflicts of interest in any matter under discussion by any member of the Commission or any officer, employee, agent, or consultant of the Commission.

Clause 13 of the Bill deals with confidentiality of the information.

Clause 14 of the Bill states that any Act to the decision of the Commission is not invalid because of a defect or irregularity in or in a connection with appointment of the members of the Commission or in the case of an acting appointment, the occasion of acting has not arisen or had ceased.

Clause 15 of the Bill provides for the protection of liability against the Commission and any member of the Commission and any officer, employee, agent or consultant of the Commission from civil or criminal proceedings unless it is shown that the Commission did not act in good faith or without reasonable care.

Clause 16 of the Bill specifies the determination of salaries that the Commission may make.

Clause 17 of the Bill provides for the manner in which determination made by the Commission is to be released.

Clause 18 of the Bill lays out the timeframe for the determination of salaries and how long the determination continues in force. It also provides for the review of the salaries determined by the Commission.

Clause 19 of the Bill provides for the manner in which interim adjustments can be made to the salaries determined by the Commission.

Clause 20 of the Bill provides that prescribed bodies listed in the schedule may consult with the Commission in relation to the determination of the Commission.

Clause 21 of the Bill states that prescribed bodies listed in the schedule can make submissions to the Commission.

Clause 22 of the Bill states that the determination made by the Commission prevail over any contract of service to the extent that if there is any conflict between the determination by the Commission and the contract of service.

Clause 23 of the Bill provides that if a salary determined by the Commission is lower than what the holder of that position is receiving at the time of the termination, the salary must not be reduced as a result of that determination.

Clause 24 of the Bill provides for funding details for the Commission.

Clause 25 of the Bill outlines the requirement for the Commission to publish an Annual Report as soon as practicable after the end of each financial year.

Clause 26 of the Bill states that in the event there is inconsistency the newly legislation will prevail over any other written law.

Clause 27 of the Bill empowers the Minister to make regulations to give effect to the new legislation.

Clause 28 of the Bill authorises the Minister to amend the schedule to the new legislation by notice in the Gazette.

Clause 29 of the Bill repeals the Higher Salaries Act 2011.

Clause 30 of the Bill provides the transitional provision for all determinations of salary made prior to the commencement of any legislation to remain valid until they are revised under the new legislation. Clause 30 of the Bill also provides that any determination of salary that is pending at the commencement of the new legislation is to be determined in accordance with the new legislation.

Clause 31 of the Bill provides for the consequential amendments.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, once again, I would like to mention that someone actually mentioned from the other side that last year we brought around 49 Bills, which was basically 50 percent of the Bills that were brought into this Parliament under Standing Order 51. But, considering this Bill No. 24, 100 percent of the Bills that had been brought into this Parliament by the current Government are under Standing Order 51.

Once again, I would like to reiterate the same thing that they were the ones sitting on this side for the past eight years and opposing the use of Standing Order 51. They went out to campaign saying that we have been abusing Standing Order 51, and here they are, 54 Bills in eight months and all under Standing Order 51. If that was not less, they also reduced the number of sittings for the budget session trying to actually compact everything in one week when initially it was discussed and agreed for two weeks of the budget session.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Bill No. 24 of 2023, so this means all 24 Bills that have been brought by the Government to this particular august Parliament under Standing Order 51 – 100 percent. We are not against the use of Standing Order 51, we had been using it and this is why we need to be cautious of what we actually say in Parliament. The table has turned around and now they are actually sitting that side, and I do not know how they can go and face the same voters and explain to them why they are using Standing Order 51 to bring in.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- This is a new Bill, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I urge the honourable Attorney-General to reconsider his stance and let us send it to the Committee to do a public consultation and bring the report back to Parliament and we can debate this particular Bill in the November sitting.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can remember that one of the senior Members of Government said, 'his salary is higher than the honourable Prime Minister's because he is technical in nature'. That is the very reason we want to set up the High Salaries Commission. That is urgent. The Government has already made a decision that it is going to set up the High Salaries Commission, funds have been set aside and we need this body to be set up as soon as possible so that they can do

the work they are being given. It is the policy of the Government. Only 14 Bills that have come to this Parliament under Standing Order 51. Rest assured, there will be Bills in the future that will go through the normal manner. I endorse the Bill, Sir.

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

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	29
Noes	-	25
Not voted	-	1

Motion agreed to.

**REVIEW OF THE PARLIAMENTARY REMUNERATIONS ACT 2014**

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

That in addition to the resolution of Parliament on Wednesday, 12th July 2023, Parliament approves that the Emoluments Committee:

- (a) Review the salaries, allowances and benefits of the Members of Parliament, President and Speaker as provided for under the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014;
- (b) Review the Parliamentary Retirement Allowances Act 1989; and
- (c) Must report back to Parliament at a later sitting.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- I second the motion, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER.- You are given 20 minutes, honourable Minister.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not intend to take 20 minutes. This is a motion Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is brought before Parliament really in agreement in terms of the Emoluments Committee being a bipartisan Committee and represented by both sides of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in July 2023 I had moved that pursuant to Standing Order 129 that the Emoluments Committee be established to review the salaries and allowances of the Members of Parliament as provided for under the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014 and the Emoluments Committee must report back to Parliament at the September Sitting. This was unanimously agreed to by all Members of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Emoluments Committee has convened six times and in our meetings, we have received submissions from all political parties who are represented in Parliament and as a result of these submissions, the parties have addressed the position of the Speaker and also the President as provided for in the Parliamentary Remunerations Act, as well as submissions were made about the retirement allowances under the Parliamentary Retirement Allowances Act.

I wish to make further additions to the words of the motion to amend it, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to include the Review of the Salaries, Allowances and Benefits for the positions of His Excellency the President and the honourable Speaker as well as the inclusion of the retirement allowances in the Parliamentary Retirement Allowances Act including pensions.

I do acknowledge that this was submitted in the motion being moved in July by the Members of the Opposition to include the issue on pensions and the Retirement Allowances Act. However, Mr. Speaker, the Emoluments Committee convening has received a huge support from all parties represented here in Parliament to also review this. So, we are a Committee that listens and though we were to report back this week, we have sort the extension of time to report back at a later sitting in this motion, Sir, as well as to seek Parliament's support for the inclusion of the remuneration of the honourable Speaker as well as His Excellency the President as well as the consideration of the retirement allowances in the Parliament, Retirement Allowances Act.

I seek Parliament to adopt the following amendments as highlighted in the motion that I have moved as I had read out earlier.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on this motion. This motion seeks Parliament's endorsement for the Emoluments Committee to review salaries, allowances and benefits not only for the Members of Parliament but also for the Speaker and His Excellency the President under the Parliamentary Remunerations Act of 2014 and the Parliamentary Retirement Allowance Act of 1989.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I understand the legislation guiding MPs benefits are outdated. For example, the Parliamentary Retirement Allowance Act is 34 years old. Also, there are certain provisions in the Parliamentary Remuneration Act that need to be amended as discussed during the induction workshop for better clarity and interpretation. However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question is whether it is ethical for the MPs to review their own salaries and benefits through an Emoluments Committee made up of Members of Parliament.

The review of MPs salaries and allowances is a sensitive issue that needs to be handled carefully and ethically otherwise it can erode public trust. In my view, we have to avoid conflict of interest. Parliamentarians must not have a direct role in setting their own salaries and benefits.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are international best practices used by Parliaments around the world and we must do the same to ensure the remuneration is fair, equitable and free from political influence.

The Emoluments Committee can play the role of a facilitator but not directly involved in determining the salaries and benefits, not even receiving a submission from political parties as I have heard from the Chairperson of the Committee.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the motion before the House, in my personal view, needs to be amended to allow the appointment of an independent authority or expert to determine MPs salaries and benefits including the Speaker and His Excellency the President. If we lack that expertise or interest in the Fijian market then the Emoluments Committee, with the help of Parliament can seek assistance from development partners or from other Parliaments around the globe.

I would like to hear a little bit more during the closing of motion for honourable Tabuya to tell us whether how the Parliamentarians are involved in this Committee just for clarity.

This morning, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have heard from honourable Gavoka that our economy is doing very well, very emphasised. Liquidity is high but I just want to highlight one simple point, yes, liquidity is high, people have taken loan in fact the loans have been approved but it is sitting in the banks, they are not uplifting the loan. So, liquidity may be high, approvals are there but they are not uplifting the loans and that needs to be taken into consideration.

However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, if the economy is doing so well, then my question is, why the Government has forgotten its promises made during the elections such as increasing minimum wages for our unskilled workers and the review of salaries and wages for our civil servants? I hope this is also on the Government's agenda and I look forward to a motion in the future or a ministerial statement or anything of that nature detailing what you intend to do on these two issues.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to make a two cents contribution to the motion that is before us. It will be proper if I, at this stage, declare an interest on this motion. I am expressing my own personal view and not those of my colleagues. The motion that is before us says that the Parliament approves that the Emoluments Committee reviews the salary, allowances and benefits of the Members of Parliament, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I submit that it is wrong for us as Members of Parliament to be in the Committee and review the salaries, allowances and benefits. I would like to suggest as earlier on suggested by the honourable Premila Kumar that a committee should be entirely of people outside this Parliament. At the moment, I am told that the committee is made up of all political parties except National Federation Party (NFP). One wonders why not NFP, by these three, so three parties there; one each. Okay, let me tell why – because when people will start asking them about the salaries and wages, they will say to the ordinary people, “we were not even in the committee.” So stop!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.K. BALA.- Honourable Manoa, where is the report on Grace Road?

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- That is what you do.

HON. P.K. BALA.- By this Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think by having an independent committee, we would be showing the very people who voted us in here that we are quite happy to have our work assessed by an independent committee. For example, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the workers have their trade unions, the salary staff have their associations and for us, are we going to bargain ourselves? That is what really concerns me. I would say no and that is why I am very strongly suggesting that an independent committee to assess our work and may I also urge that such a committee must not only be seen to be independent, but it must be independent in practice.

Lastly Mr. Speaker, Sir, whether the time is right for this exercise? We heard what the honourable Deputy Prime Minister had to say about the economy this morning. Let us be fair to the people, they are going through some difficult times. On Friday, I have an opportunity to make an End of Week Statement but let me say and I put it to Parliament, let us amend.

Even that Committee, during the introduction of the motion, the mover said that the Committee had met six times, that is fine because this is in front of us, this is an opportunity to correct it. Dissolve that Committee and appoint an independent committee, what is wrong with that? If we can ask the workers to bargain with their trade unions, the salary staff with their association, why not us? What example are we giving to the people out there?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is my two cents contribution and I think it will make some sense to the people on the Government side.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, the motion by the honourable Madam Minister and Leader of the Government Business deserves our full support because it would result in giving

what I say true meaning to the credibility and independence of the work of the Parliamentary Emoluments Committee in determining the remuneration and allowances for Members of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, just to remind honourable Bala and honourable Kumar, when this motion was brought to Parliament and I know that motion was brought to Parliament with the concurrence of Opposition Members and I know without naming some of them, they were coming to me and saying, “when is the Emoluments Committee is going to meet?” When I spoke on that motion and I want to quote what I said, “but that does not mean that the Parliamentary Emoluments Committee itself, Mr. Speaker, will make an assessment because the principle is that we cannot determine our own salaries and allowances ourselves”. We have said that, and he is ignoring it, so what we said ....

HON. P.K. BALA.- What did the motion say.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So we need some experts. The honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament had already said that this Committee will invite independent experts, those who can look at best practices, data, et cetera and advise the Committee because ultimately whatever happens, whether it is a Committee of experts or independent Committee, it will still have to come to Parliament and we will have to vote. The only thing that we are saying is that the experts based on some reasonable independent in our assessment but the work of Parliament and passing of an Act or amendment to an Act will have to be done by Parliamentarians.

The other thing that I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is the process of determining the allowances of office holders and Members of Parliament is distinctly different. What we are doing is distinctly different, Sir, under what happened under the FijiFirst Government in 2016. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a five-Member Committee made its own recommendations, and this was in 2016, they forgot that there was an independent Emoluments Committee that met. That Committee chaired by a Government Member, recommended huge increases in allowances for Ministers and others. This is a Government that is going to review that. They have actually forgotten, Mr. Speaker.

The other point that I want to make and remind all of them, I know he is playing politics and trying to pretend that he is concerned about the people and making generalisations about cost of living.

HON. P.K. BALA.- People know we have qualities.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- We know that he goes and lies around the place.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Everyone knows you too.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- But what, Mr. Speaker, they forget when the military took over the Government and some of them were part of it, there was a Decree which established the Government Ministers salaries and it was paid by a private accounting firm without any disclosure and more, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

When they brought the Constitution when we had the 2014 Elections, after the Elections, when they knew that they had won and were going to form Government, on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2014 before the first sitting of Parliament because in the Constitution they put a provision to say that Decrees can be made until the first sitting of the Parliament under the Constitution. What they did, Mr. Speaker, Sir, some of them were part of that party in Government, they brought a Decree.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before the first sitting of Parliament in 2014, they passed and determined their own salaries. Some of them were sworn in, they did not know, they knew what was going to



happen, that is what they did. So, really as a Government, we brought this motion to review all these and we are saying that the Committee should invite independent experts.

HON. P.K. BALA.- What does the motion say? You cannot read the motion.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- We have already had discussions, the Committee is already doing it.

Mr. Speaker he is totally confused.

HON. P.K. BALA.- I am not confused!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- You are the Professor, you cannot even read the motion.

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, he is so agitated and confused that he forgot that there is a Terms of Reference for the Emoluments Committee. The Terms of Reference very clearly says...

HON. K.K. LAL.- All of you will benefit!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ... that you can have an independent committee to look at that. This is the kind of lies that he tries to tell about what he is.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Decrease your pay!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Privately, Mr. Speaker, they all want it.

(Laughter)

They all want increase in allowances.

HON. P.K. BALA.- You want it!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- They all want retirement allowances.

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. P.K. BALA.- Stop blaming us!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- He is yelling, Mr. Speaker.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Don't point at me!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- He is yelling, Mr. Speaker, because I am telling the truth.

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying this, when Parliament came into being, the Public Accounts Committee of which the convention was always that the Opposition will Chair. When as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, I asked the Ministry of Economy at that time and the Prime Minister's Office to come to the Committee and disclose what was happening with these private accounting firms and what was being paid. The moment I did that, the next thing they brought a motion in Parliament to change the Standing Order and sack the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. That was what they did.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Hypocrisy!

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Here, they are talking about hypocrisy, they are trying to moralise when they have no standing, no leg to stand on. In fact, what has happened, what we have done, Sir, since we have come into Government, not only we have provided the freedom for them as Opposition Members, resources but we are practising what should be practised in a normal parliamentary democracy and that is why we are going through this process.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope that they will support the motion as they have been already part of it. He was talking about why NFP is not there, we are in Government, as Government Members were there, they represent all of us. When we talk about a Committee, it means the three parties and it does not have to be NFP or SODELPA or PAP, if two parties can represent us, that is fine, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the ....

HON. P.K. BALA.- You playing politics with your partners.

(Laughter)

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just wish the honourable Members on the other side would have consulted their honourable Members on the Emoluments Committee, because they would have received full information of what has occurred within the Emoluments Committee. We put out an Expression of Interest twice for an independent consultant and there are terms of reference for the Emoluments Committee. We are in the process of securing one and we are convening again next week to continue our work. Yes, we have also consulted our development partners as suggested.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just hope that we will support this unanimously as we have done in the first motion, simply because, this has become a bipartisan exercise, working very well with the honourable Opposition Members, honourable Bulitavu and honourable Maharaj, with the rest of us with the Members of the Committee, myself, honourable Radrodro and honourable Tuisawau.

Again, I want to thank the Members of the Committee for their hard work and also the political parties who made submissions. At the end of the day, whatever the independent consultant submits to us and whatever we bring, will only be recommendations and it will be up to Parliament to pass - that is the prerogative of Parliament, so I seek the full support of Parliament in this motion.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, since you all are laughing and having a good time, the motion was announced by the Madam Secretary-General.

Amendments to Part B of Schedule to the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014

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

That -

- (a) Parliament adopts the following amendments to Part B of the Schedule to the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014 for the following positions:
  1. Prime Minister -  
“11 Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”
  2. Cabinet Ministers -  
“9. Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”
  3. Assistant Ministers -  
“9. Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”
  4. Leader of the Opposition -  
“9. Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”
  5. Members of Parliament (including Deputy Speaker, Government/Opposition Whip and Leader of the Government in Parliament and excluding the Prime Minister, Ministers, Speaker and the Leader of the Opposition)  
“7. Parliamentary duty allowance – \$10,000 per annum (Not taxable).”
- (b) The amendments to Part B of the Schedule to the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014 be adopted as an amendment to the Determination pursuant to section 3 of the Parliamentary Remunerations Act 2014; and
- (c) This amendment to the Determination to take effect from 1st August, 2023 and expire on 31st December, 2026.”

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as all the honourable Members are aware, in the previous two terms of Parliament, Parliament used to pay a certain figure amounting to \$15,000 as part of the funds allocated to the political parties for attending to its political party functions that are represented in Parliament, and it has been the practice in the last two terms. Some political parties would allocate a constituency allowance to its Members of Parliament, so this is nothing new.

It should be noted that the current Government would now like to channel these funds to the honourable Members as part of their Parliamentary Duty Allowance, to be able to visit areas where they come from and to certain areas close by and assist the people of Fiji wherever they can even though Fiji is one constituency. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the funds breakdown is as follows:

- \$10,000 be allocated to all honourable Members; and
- \$5,000 be allocated to the political party they represent.

These funds allocated would be like the past Parliaments where these allowances were given to all honourable Members. However, we have brought this by way of motion as there are precedents done in the past, for example, on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2018 to be exact, this was a motion presented by the honourable Usamate in terms of the FNPF contribution to be paid to the honourable Members who are not allowed to re-join FNPF after withdrawing twice, and now this motion is moved to amend the determination of the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 2014.

This is something new here and given that all honourable Members of this august Parliament serve the people of Fiji in their own different ways, Mr. Speaker, Sir, these funds would greatly assist the honourable Members as part of their duties to our people.

So, in order to address this particular issue to see what can be done about it, this is why the members of this Parliament need to support this motion so that Parliament adopts the Amendment to Part B of the Schedule to the Parliamentary Remuneration Act 2014, as highlighted in the motion that I just read out earlier.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a point of clarification. We would like to enquire why the Chairperson of the Emoluments Committee is bringing in this particular motion. It should be the Leader of Government Business but as being mentioned by you Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the Leader of Government Business is bringing this motion as Chairperson of the Emoluments Committee. There has been no discussion and I think we need to rephrase it to Leader of Government Business rather than the Chairperson of the Emoluments Committee.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- The subject is both...

HON. P.K. BALA.- No...

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- *Hansard*.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Its record, evidence.

MR. SPEAKER.- He is just seeking clarification on that.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your indulgence, I agree with the correction that has been stated by the honourable Opposition Whip, that it is a motion moved by the Leader of Government Business.

MR. SPEAKER.- That has been clarified, honourable Maharaj. It is the Leader of Government in Parliament.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we must all remember at all times that our *Hansard* is really there for infinity and it must always be correct. So, honourable Minister of Finance, I think the honourable Minister for Women has actually done the right thing. We cannot mull over something and just say that it is okay. We cannot do that because *Hansard* must be correct.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think with this particular motion right at the outset, let me just say from our perspective we are objecting to it. There are a few reasons to it and I think the people of Fiji deserve an explanation of what has transpired and why this is actually before us. Everyone in Fiji needs to be aware of what is actually happening. It has been said before that this is tantamount to a backdoor way of giving MPs an increase of \$10,000 per annum in cash.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are also led to believe that there were consultations between the Ministry of Finance and senior executives in Parliament, and the SGP's Office decided to disburse the actual grant to the political parties which was in the sum of about \$2.125 million.

Mr. Speaker, what will happen is now that irrespective of the numbers or members you have in Parliament each political party will receive \$325,000 each. Please bear with me because I think this is something that needs to be said. Each political party is also at liberty to spend without any acquittals to Parliament which simply means ...

MR. SPEAKER.- Are we on the same...

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Yes, Sir. It is part of the same package and I will get to the \$10,000 one in a minute because it has been done like that.

Now, what is happening is that it simply means that you do not have to tell Parliament how the money is spent. However, because of the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act, all political parties have to, on an annual basis, provide to the Fijian Election Office the annual audited accounts which includes sources of revenue, includes any Parliamentary grants and this \$325,000 now is a new allocation. This was never previously given to political parties. The reason why I am doing this, Sir, is for the whole of Fiji to understand.

What was given by Parliament previously during the FijiFirst Government was a grant based on the number of Members a political party had in Parliament. And quite simply put, if you had five it was multiplied by \$15,000. If you had three it was three times \$15,000. So, whatever your number is what you got. Again, this money would be spent by the Party as it saw fit, to conduct its affairs.

Mr. Speaker, apart from this new allocation of \$325,000 given to each political party the previous allocation of \$15,000 would be paid differently. Now, what is happening is only \$5,000 will be given per Member to the political party. In other words, if a political party had three seats, they would get \$15,000 as opposed to \$45,000. The balance of \$10,000 from the \$15,000 would be given to each Member of Parliament and this new personal benefit will be called the Parliamentary Duty Allowance. This would be payable to all individual parliamentary Member right from the Prime Minister, 3 Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, Assistant Ministers, Leader of Opposition, and all Members of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, basically that \$10,000 was going to be paid to each MP in the form of \$833.33 on a monthly basis, and it will go directly into each individual MP's bank account. That also, along with that \$10,000, every MP would not have to provide any acquittals. In other words, they can spend it as they like and not to provide receipts or invoices to Parliament. And more significantly that \$10,000 would be tax exempt. Are there any problems with this? It is a very simple explanation, Sir. This explanation was given to the other side by our General Secretary of the FijiFirst Party.

We are deeply concerned with all of this for two very critical reasons. Under this particular scheme of allocation, all the political parties will receive their \$325,000 despite their size. Two political parties namely SODELPA and NFP with no more than five seats and then you have got the People's Alliance Party and FijiFirst both with more than 26, but we all get the same amount.

The disparity is quite huge, Mr. Speaker, but then again this is the prerogative of the SGP and mind you, Mr. Speaker, this cannot be interfered. I think we have raised it also with respect to the anomaly that exists with respect to what has been sent out by the Secretary-General of Parliament. On the one hand, it is stated that the party did not have to provide any acquittals and could spend the funds as it actually wish but on the other hand, it is stated that the party was to spend on parliamentary

expenses such as staffing and other expenses. There appears to be some restrictions. Again, we have sought clarification and I am not sure if that has actually been received.

But the second more critical issue is that the new \$10 thousand allocation tax-free to individual Members of Parliament, this is a matter that raises some legal issues. There is a concern here. In fact, under the Parliamentary Remuneration Act, any remuneration which includes salaries, allowances, benefits under section ...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ... allowances are not taxed when you travel, as far as the sitting allowance is not taxed, do not confuse yourself again ...

HON. F.S. KOYA.- This is what happens, when he gets told something and he knows that he is about to gig it, he starts ...

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Why did you not object in the previous sitting ...

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Please listen. It is a legal matter, so the Section 2 of the Act pertaining to those particular officer holders such as the President, Prime Minister, other Ministers, it also applies to Leader of the Opposition, Speaker, Deputy Speakers and Members of Parliament. Section 3 of that particular Act that fall on that must have Parliamentary approval. We are not saying anything bad here, we are just pointing out to you that actually you are doing this wrong, you have done it wrong, you have actually disbursed the money without proper approval of Parliament.

I am not sure whether the Office of the Attorney-General proffered the advice or whether it was done without the advice of the Attorney-General. I am not sure, they can figure that out and they can sort that out themselves, that is their problem, but we have pointed it out and this is why we are here today; we are rectifying something that they made a very huge mistake on. It is massive, this is the people's money that we are actually talking about.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- That is exactly what we are doing, honourable Minister. This Parliamentary Duty Allowance for individual members which includes everyone, this new allowance has not been approved under the Act and the part (b) of the schedule which sets out the specific amounts has not been amended. As you can see, we are saying what they are now trying to rectify after having been rightfully informed by the former Attorney-General and our Secretary-General.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can tell you right now, all FijiFirst parliamentarians will be returning the sum that has been sent by Parliament because in effect, it is illegal. We can all get done by the Fijian Elections Office (FEO). That is something that you must do very carefully. This is not a laughing matter, it is not something that you can just whitewash over, you can just brush it by the wayside. The very reason why this motion is before us, is to correct the mistake made by those that decided.

HON. P.K. BALA.- One man ...

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I do not know who.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the upshot of all of these, is that any increase in benefit for Members of Parliament whether it is an allowance, or salary or other benefits, must be approved through the Act which includes the amendment to the Schedule and sets up all those particular benefits. The whole purpose of having these independent committees deliberating on the increase and followed by debate

in Parliament show that honourable Members can actually do this so the public can actually speak and participate and have a say through the Members of Parliament whether they should get a pay rise or not.

This particular increase of \$10 thousand for the 55 Members of Parliament, being done like this in a backdoor manner without following the process is actually 100 percent incorrect and wrong, and they are trying to correct it now. It is an abomination, and we cannot be part of making just white washing it over and we are not supportive of this particular motion.

It has been incorrectly done and we mostly certainly at the moment also in light of what is actually happening with the 15 percent VAT, increase cost of living, we do not see that but that is another argument but the processes and the law have not been followed. History will tell because as I said right at the outset, *Hansard* will report this, word for word verbatim about who said what and whether it was right or wrong.

There needs to be an admission on the part of those that actually decided that they were wrong. That admission comes by way of this motion being on the floor today Sir, they are wrong they admit that they are wrong. This motion tells them that they are wrong and we as a party and all of us sitting in this side of the House do not support this particular motion.

MR. SPEAKER.- I thank you, and I now call upon the Chairperson of the Emoluments Committee to speak in reply.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Sir, the amendment to the schedule of the Parliamentary Remunerations Act, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I thank the Secretary-General for explaining this very clearly during the Business Committee as to why this was being done and Honourable Koya was there. It allays any doubt whatsoever to the legitimacy of this \$10,000 duty allowance per Member for each of the 55 Members of Parliament as provided for by the Legislature in the 2023-2024 Budget.

One of the things, Mr Speaker, they need to understand unlike before that the budget process in some parliaments, there is an independent committee who does the budget for parliament, once the budget is approved it is for the Parliament to determine how it wants to use its expenditure as per their submissions.

We know, Mr Speaker, what this is and I want to thank you for that, the initiative under the grant for political parties represented in Parliament is well- thought-out and carefully considered. And if what I heard from Honourable Koya, if in my view greedy, unscrupulous, 2-men party of which there are 26 Members of the Opposition, demands the money that they are being given as duty allowance channelled into the financial coffers of that party then it is their only internal governance they need to deal with.

This Allowance is payable to them only in monthly instalments to fulfil the needs of the people they represent as well as members of the public in what is a single national constituency. They will tell me and we know, I sat in the Opposition for 8 years, the MPs have certain obligations, commitments and many in the Opposition benches know that. I know that they told me and I understand what they are talking about.

Here, Mr Speaker, I am referring to the Opposition because Members of the coalition government, we are not puppets of the leaders, that is very clear, that is the difference. And our leaders, ...

HON. F.S. KOYA.- A Point of Order, Sir. I think the Honourable Minister of Finance ...

MR. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Standing Order 46 - Unparliamentary language, Sir.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- What is your point of order?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Unparliamentary language. Mr. Speaker, sometimes we take as good as we get. But this continuous barrage or unscrupulous ....

MR. SPEAKER.- I have not granted that you continue because you have just raised a Point of Order and I still have to rule on that. I think he is within his rights of using whatever words he has been using. Please, continue.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I think honourable Members on the other side are actually having a nightmare because they have to decide, to give or not to give ...

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ... to keep clearing the FijiFirst Election debt.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Which is not their responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the legislature has the highest court, has been given substantial funding. As you know this is to ensure that the Parliamentary Committees work well on addressing some of the issues, making recommendations with the view to halting the non-consultative manner where Parliamentary democracy was trampled upon.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the political party represented in Parliament, we want to ensure that they have sufficient funding and resources to fulfil not only their objective of being highly efficient and robust in parliamentary work but also to facilitate people access to Parliament.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, honourable Koya was talking about accountability and all that. The current funding formula is guided and provided for under the political parties, Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures Act. When we were getting those funding before, we had to account for that as part of the Political Parties Act. For example, Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the current funding formula, FijiFirst would receive a total of \$455,000 in the current financial year. The biggest grant of the four political parties in Parliament and that too, despite being in Opposition, they wanted the \$10,000 pay for each of their 26 Members of Parliament to be deposited in their party account. That is where the source of contention was despite saying it was illegal, so they were confused.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- If it was illegal then they do not have the desire to grab it. We know, Mr. Speaker, what the real motive is.

HON. P.K. BALA.- (Inaudible)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Because the FijiFirst Party, right in a debt apart from piling



up debt on the country that is what they want to pay because they want all the money to go to their political party's account.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Confused.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, let me also say that the then Attorney-General proposed \$10,000 per Member of Parliament as political party grant, this is after 2014 General Elections. Previously, Sir, in all Parliaments and this is true for all democracies anywhere in the world, Members of Parliament are provided appropriate funding, resources constituency office, research officers, some of those luxuries we cannot afford. But in the normal Parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this sort of funding all political parties were provided funding to operate the offices.

In 2014, the then FijiFirst Government and the Attorney-General who was the Minister responsible for Parliament unilaterally decided that he was going to change the funding formula. Smaller parties like us we did not even have an office in Parliament, they moved from the bigger space in Veiuto to this Parliament, we do not have any of those resources.

In the previous Parliament, Sir, you would recall every political party regardless of their size had a minimum funding whether you have two Members or three Members or 50 Members, you had a minimum guaranteed funding from Parliament which provided you a certain number of staff to do your duty as a political party, that was taken away say in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of, in some sense, misinformation about these allowances. Honourable Koya, I was talking about allowances not being taxed. I mean he knows all the allowances, even the allowances for travel, all not taxable.

HON I.B. SERUIRATU.- It is already established.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is already established.

Yeah, so he is talking about this as we are talking about Parliamentary Duty Allowance. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing untoward about what the Parliament has done. Previously, MPs were paid a Constituency allowance, now we have a single national constituency.

The last such allowance Mr. Speaker, Sir, was a sum of \$7,000 per annum paid to MPs from 1996-2006. It did not belong to the political parties but to the MPs to help their constituents. Similarly, this Parliamentary Duty Allowance is for the MPs to provide assistance when invited for public engagements and I know there is a lot of demand for Members of Parliament.

Still, Mr. Speaker, on the same issue of resourcing we now see that there are political leaders out there who are not in Parliament commenting about how this allowance and one of them knows very well, his party was a beneficiary of the allowances that Parliament provided in terms of not just the allowance but also to run an office. Let me give you an example, Sir, the Parliamentary Hansard of March 1998 detailed expenditure incurred by political party officers from 1994 when the honourable Prime Minister was the Prime Minister then to 1997.

The records reveal then are clear. In fact, under that arrangement for example the Fiji Labour Party office staff which was looking after only seven MPs incurred office expenses of \$21,325 from 1994 to 1997, this is just office expenses, this does not include the salaries. Then SVT Government office staff incurred expenses of only \$2,679 for the same period. The three-year total expenses for the Office of the Leader of the Opposition occupied by 20 NFP MPs was \$1,900.

So, Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to make is that the decision by the Parliament to ensure that there is adequate resources for all political parties in Parliament to be able to do their work effectively is the right thing to do. I think this motion itself Mr. Speaker, in this Parliament I know honourable Koya talked about correcting it, I mean when they were in Government they corrected so many things....

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Do not worry about us!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- So, the point we are making Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that this is a very normal Parliamentary assessment by the Office of the Speaker by the Parliament which is an Independent Institution. This motion Mr. Speaker is designed to do that and I would urge honourable Members on the other side because I know they all want to support that but, Mr. Speaker, they are hunger with the system of a political party which does not provide any democracy to them. They do not have caucus meetings, they do not have management board, they do not have a policy.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Stop pointing.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is a two-men party.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Talk about yourself!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- All of them Mr. Speaker, are afraid because if they do not listen to the former Attorney-General the General Secretary they can be sacked tomorrow and losing their seat in Parliament, that is their problem.

But I know a lot of them actually agree with this Mr. Speaker and what you have done is the right thing and we support that.

MR. SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Premila first then honourable .....

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for allowing me to speak on this motion. I would like remind honourable Biman Prasad...

HON. P.K. BALA.- Please, do so.

(Laughter)

... that he is so obsessed with the Opposition. Please, focus on the Government. If he had focused on the finances and running of the Government, they would have not made this blunder. You have already paid us, you have put it into our accounts, what are you trying to do here? Correction? Of course, that is what you are doing. We are simply picking up the process because it is illegal to receive that money, when it is not endorsed by Parliament. That is the point here, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, any amount of damage control will tarnish the Government's image. You are trying to control this, but people know what you have done. They are already talking about how you can illegally give this money, put it into every honourable Member's account without getting an approval from Parliament. When you pay allowances to the Parliamentarians, we are guided by the Remunerations Act and the Act makes no reference to this parliamentary allowance. If it was paid to the parties directly, that is another matter, but because it is paid to individual MPs as a non-taxable amount, of course, it raises a question because people and businesses are suffering with this 15 percent VAT increase, and here, we are given \$10,000 into our account without ....

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- But you have already received that amount.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- That is what I am saying, we have received the money but that is illegal and you are trying to legalise the process now; admit that. You have failed to do the right thing. Unfortunately, the legal eagles on that side had not been advising properly. Again, I urge the honourable Prime Minister, “Prime Minister, Sir, you have to change your Attorney-General. What kind of advice is he giving you?”

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- Sit down!

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Get honourable Vosarogo, he will be a better Attorney-General, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Deputy Prime Minister has been a professor for a long time. He is very good at mudding the waters. Her issue is talking about something else, he goes on this long lecture about allowances all over, but the issue is very simple. A mistake has been made, money was put into the accounts of honourable MPs without authorisation from where it was supposed to be authorised. A mistake has been made. This is the point, you lectured about this, lectures about that, that is the point. He is talking about this allowance, that allowance - those allowances were already prescribed. He is talking about something here that is not prescribed in an existing legislation and wants to make the change, and before that change is made, the money is deposited into our accounts. That is illegal. Let me say that again, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is not illegal.

HON. J. USAMATE.- That is illegal. I concur with the sentiments of my fellow colleague, the honourable Premila Kumar. If those who are supposed to be giving advice to the Government on what is legal are not doing their jobs, maybe they should be changed. This is not the first time that this has happened. Earlier this year, we had a motion that had to be withdrawn, because, I believe, of faulty legal advice.

We heard what happened with the GCC, the implementation of that without the subsidiary requirements being fulfilled, and again here, action is being taken without the legal processes being completed. This, for me is ineptitude, it is incompetence. You have to take it and swallow it, you have made a mistake, admit it! Admit that you have made a mistake. Stop mudding the waters, focus on the issue. The very fact that this motion has come, shows that a mistake has been done. That is the point.

MR. SPEAKER.- May I have your Right of Reply, Madam.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is unbelievable, the other side of Parliament.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- The mistake you made?

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Unbelievable. First of all they have got to realise, Mr. Speaker, Sir, where the Parliamentary Duty Allowance came from. This is the prerogative and the discretion of Parliament, it is an independent institution from Government.

Get that in their heads, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not a decision of the Government, it is a decision of Parliament.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Say it again.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Who wants the money?

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- In order to regularise the issue, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is brought by motion in Parliament by the Leader of Government in Parliament. Yes, we have taken it on. One of you else could have brought the motion to Parliament. Mr. Speaker, Sir, and none of them will admit, they are all sitting there on that side of Parliament, they have come to us and said, “we need this allowance.”

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.K. BALA.- Who?

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- They will not admit it

HON. P.K. BALA.- Point of Order!

(Laughter)

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- I said some, not you, honourable Bala. It is okay, you can sit down.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Sit down.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Not you, you can sit down. Not him, Mr. Speaker.

HON. P.K. BALA.- You sure?

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Yes, sit down.

HON. P.K. BALA.- State my name and say that I was not one of them.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Not honourable Bala, not honourable Bala.

(Laughter)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, they are going on as if this is an increase in any amount. They are saying that people are suffering, 15 percent VAT, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have been receiving the same amount for the last two terms - \$15,000. You know what they are really defending, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the decision of their General-Secretary. He wants the whole \$15,000 for the party, that is what is happening here. He does not want to give an amount to their Members. Why make it our problem and bring it here to Parliament and go on about this whole crusade....

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- You brought the motion.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- No.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- You the one making it, they are making it, that is a crusade, “Oh, you know what, the people are suffering, we have made a mistake.”

HON. H. CHAND.- Who increased VAT?

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- This amount for the last two terms has been going to the parties, maybe they have not been paid constituency allowances, the rest of us have and you know what, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are doing the right thing here because now we are becoming accountable to allow for Members to spend money outside of their ministries and outside of Government.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Point of Order!

MR. SPEAKER.- Point of Order, honourable Usamate.

HON. J. USAMATE.- The honourable Leader of Government is not saying the truth. She is misleading Parliament.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- What is your Point of Order?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Misleading Parliament because she says that this same allowance was done in the previous Parliament. There is a difference. Now \$10,000 is coming to individuals, previously it all went to the party. Those are two distinctly different things, so to say that it is the same is different. An individual is different from a party. Individual, one, *dua*. Party, a group of people so that is not correct.

MR. SPEAKER.- Continue, honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that the other side is going on about people are suffering, 15 percent increase in VAT, and that we should not be receiving this money, you have been receiving it under your government for two terms. You have been receiving it! Mr. Speaker, Sir, stop misleading the people to say that you feel sorry for them. It is the same amount. Members have been receiving it individually, maybe not your party but we have been receiving it individually in our party and that is an internal decision, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Now, we are bringing to the forefront, we are making it a Parliamentary Duty Allowance that Members receive so when we Ministers go out and spend in our constituencies, we will not be accused of using Government State funds like they were in their campaign, Sir. Using State resources to campaign, using State resources to visit constituencies, this is clear, this is transparency, this is accountability, we have the allowance to be able to do so. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this was your prerogative and Parliament and we as Government are defending it and that is why we are regularising it now. Your decision to make it between

Parliament sittings, we are now here in a Parliament sitting, we are regularising it by motion and we will ask the Members on the other side who actually agree with this to support.

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. SPEAKER. – Order! Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	29
Noes	-	25
Not Voted	-	1

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we have two more motions and the hour is quickly ticking by. We will begin this one here and then we will adjourn at 6.30 p.m. for dinner before we return and continue with this motion and before we go onto the next one, that will finish us in our day's programme.

Are we clear on that, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance? So, we will begin with this motion here, but I will suspend the sitting once we hit 6.30 p.m.

### **REVIEW REPORT ON THE FIJI POLICE FORCE AUGUST 2018 - JULY 2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That Parliament debates the Review Report of the Fiji Police Force August 2018 to July 2019 Annual Report which was tabled on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2023.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will go straight to the findings of the Committee in this Report. We had seven findings that we thought that people might want to debate on. The first one is that there is a need by the Fiji Police Force for the use of drones. They think that it may help them manage the traffic congestion that we currently have on our roads.

We also noted Mr. Speaker, Sir, that despite the Fiji Police Force's attempts to increase the number of women, that there is still space within the Force for women in senior positions. We also noted that there is an increase in prevalence of crime against women and children and suicide in Fiji as reflected in the reporting period which certainly will warrant positive intervention measures not only from the Police but from all of us. Earlier on, we were given this nice frangipani as a reminder of our responsibility to children. I thank the Ministry for Women for that.

We also noted, Sir, that in recent times, a next of kin had not been able to process or procure legal claims or ownership to death and insurance benefits due to the cases of the seven years absence clause where no statute applies. Therefore, there is merit to recommending perhaps changes to the law where it be amended to the existing framework of the inquest in 1967 or creating a new piece of legislation as in the case in United Kingdom where they have introduced the Presumption of Death Act.

The Committee also noted that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Police were based on the then Strategic Framework for Change Co-ordinating Office (SFCCO) and without that, it was proper for them to align it to the National Development Plan that is in place. I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion and before I do so, I will now just highlight to you what has been put forward to the Secretariat regarding the listing of the debate, the batting order.

For the Government, it would be the honourable Minister for Home Affairs, followed by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. For the Opposition, we have identified three speakers - honourable Virendra Lal will be first, followed by honourable Ketan Lal and then rounded off by honourable Ioane Naivalurua.

We will try and alternate the speakers, so we will begin with the Opposition and then we move to the Government before we round it off from the Government side as well.

Honourable Members, I now wish to adjourn Parliament, so you may enjoy your dinner before we come back to finish the day's programme.

The Parliament adjourned at 6.29 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 7.45pm.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we have got a list of speakers submitted by the Whips. On the Opposition is honourable Virendra Lal, honourable Ketan Lal and honourable Iowane Naivalurua. From the Government is honourable Pio Tikoduadua and Deputy Prime Minister, honourable Prof. Biman Prasad.

HON. V. LAL.– Mr Speaker Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate before Parliament and in doing so, I will start by expressing my disappointment as to how we Members of Parliament were not allowed to take part in the march to protest the dumping of the nuclear wastewater in the oceans.

Initially, when the permit was issued for the march there were no such conditions where the Members of Parliament would not be allowed to be part of the march. The understanding was that this march was for the general public - for those who opposed the dumping of the nuclear wastewater in the ocean. We are representatives of the people of this country and we had more reason to be part of this march, as a lot of people outside Suva could not make it to the protest march due to work and other commitments.

Sir, it was very disrespectful of the police officers to pull us out of the crowd, saying that the march was only for members of certain organizations. Sir, through you, I request the Home Affairs Minister to investigate this and see that this is not repeated in future. The Government is harping about the protest march to take place but putting restrictions on MP's who were willing to be part of this peaceful march.

Sir, I was very surprised to read in the media that the crime rate has dropped in the country. According to the police, crime has dropped significantly but the reality on the ground is something else. As a Member of Parliament I visit a lot of settlements throughout Fiji and according to the people on the ground the crime rate has actually increased. I have been told that theft in houses, shops and office break-ins, and burglaries have increased in a lot of settlements. Family members sacrifice their sleep to take turns to keep watch on their properties and belongings at night and the sad thing is that a lot of people do not report these incidents because according to them, police will not take any action and then they themselves will become police targets.

There are also reports of police officers not wanting to write down reports. They make ordinary citizens do a lot of run around and after sometimes, these ordinary citizens get fed-up and decide not to register their complaints. Sir, I can give you many examples of such incidents taking place and despite a lot of people witnessing it, they are hesitant to come forward as witnesses.

Sir, I request the honourable Minister for Home Affairs to relook at the operations of the Fiji Police Force and work with communities to help reduce crime so that people can live peacefully. With those words, Sir, I support the motion before Parliament. Thank you.

HON. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Speaker, I will try to be brief and try to stick to the Report as opposed to trying to digress on other matters. Nevertheless, I take into account the points that have been raised by my honourable friend with regards to the concerns about the march and other matters with regards to law and order.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to thank the current Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence for tabling this Report. I recognised the report almost immediately when honourable Naupoto presented it to Parliament, as it sounded very familiar to me, given that it was the Report by a Committee which I was a Member of. I am the lone standing Member in Parliament today that wrote that Report and I am familiar with the recommendations.



I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that at the centre of the work that the Police is doing, particularly the review that we have. We would like to address these issues and many more. I recognise these issues that you are saying because I get these complaints day in and day out from Members of Parliament and the community, but this points to a bigger problem.

Mr. Speaker, it is a problem that the Force has acquired over a long time. We can start pointing fingers at who is to blame - Commissioner who, Commissioner who. We have a former Commissioner here. The honourable Naivalurua is a former Commissioner but we cannot go blaming people about whose fault it was that it started. Something I can say definitely and attest to is that I have inherited this as the Minister for Home Affairs, and it is something that I must do to improve and build the capacity of the Force.

I thank the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence for these recommendations and I can only assure Parliament that I am going to look at it seriously and this is one of the areas, like I said, is at the centre stage of our work. I just want to perhaps remind Parliament, Mr. Speaker, on one of the initiatives that we are taking right now which is the Restore Blue process.

Restore Blue is something that Government has set on the Fiji Police Force to restore it to what it was renowned for in the past - a professional force led by Police officers from Fiji, that were friendly to the public, that understood their work, understood the law and the limitations of their work. They should understand that they are there for the people and they are not there for the organisations.

I remember before the start of the march when I was talking to the Commissioner after they had given the permit for the march to happen, I told him you know you only have two jobs – secure the marchers and secure the public. Allow the people to march because that is the mark of democracy that is what we all want to do. But this kind of significant work and understanding of work that the Police should have, is something that the whole Police Force needs to be re-engineered, thus this concept of Restore Blue. That is really at the centre of our work and part of that is to involve the community in a very big way, as I have noted in Parliament before.

Community Policing should be at the centre stage, but there are many other capabilities that we have to build - professional Police officer, technology and the whole works, their offices. I continue to say that the Police Headquarters (in one of our reports I know in the last Parliament), in Nabua, while it is out of the way it is actually not safe. It is constructed on top of restaurants.

There was an incident the last time, where there was an explosion and the whole Police Headquarters was under a whole lot of risk, but that is only one. If you look at the main divisions, I cannot really share it, but it is very hard sometimes to try and understand how the Police do their work. If someone talks to me about the Military, I know it like it is at the back of my hand. This is why I am saying, the Police needs to be reformed, and they need change.

The current Police Force is almost 90 percent *iTaukei*, and the excuse that we had been given is that this is based on competency. It is not reflective of our society. It is a very few other than *iTaukei* who are members of the Police. The Police has to be generally reflective of the society where we are. As much as the assurance given that I am ready to accept the complaints, we will still feel that they cannot go to the Police, but why. This is not something that has just developed recently.

If you look at the Police report from long ago, it has been continuously highlighted. I know in the term of my Parliament, every Police annual report that came across, we made these recommendations. Half the time we were rubbished in this Parliament, and people just did not want to recognise it. Crime is not a matter of the Police, crime is a matter of society. We are willing under

the “Restore Blue” theme, to involve everyone. I know we wanted to start in this Parliament, but we need to make this political commitment. I am ready on behalf of the Government to listen to the way that we can improve this and make it better for our people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can go on forever, but I am sure I do not want to lose my audience, but tonight I recognise the recommendations that there are and I am making this commitment for Government, that I would like to re-professionalise the Force. I want to seriously look at its composition, look at the leadership and look at all the major capabilities that the Force needs to have, because their primary responsibility is to keep Fijians safe, everyone, from harm, threat, and from being abused by anyone. I would like to make this commitment to this Parliament and the people, we will do our best to try and correct some of the very major weaknesses that we have and we will stand up, and we actually do have weaknesses. But, hopefully in time, under the ‘Restore Blue’ theme, we will be able to fix these issues, however, many there may be.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise today in support of the review report presented by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, concerning the Fiji Police Force 2018 to 2019 Annual Report. This Report signifies an important step towards ensuring the safety, security and overall well-being of our nation’s citizens.

I commend the Committee for its thorough analysis and dedication to addressing the critical aspects of the Fiji Police Force operations and administration. The Committee’s review brings to light several pertinent issues that warrant our attention. The Report underscores the importance of adopting modern technologies, such as satellite, geospatial and drone technologies to address the chronic traffic congestion on Fiji’s roads. As we all know traffic congestion not only impacts productivity, but also poses risks to public safety.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, by investing in advanced technology we can revolutionise our approach to traffic management, reducing congestion and ensuring smoother mobility for our citizens. The Committee identifies the need for increased representation of women in senior positions within the Fiji Police Force. While progress has been made, there remains ample room for improvement by encouraging and facilitating women officers to access leadership training, and we can diversify perspectives and harness the full potential of our Force. Empowered women in leadership positions will undoubtedly contribute to enhanced decision making and community engagement.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reports observation of an increasing prevalence of crime against women and children as well as suicide, is deeply concerning and we must note this month is also a month where we create awareness on suicide prevention. It is our duty Mr. Speaker, Sir, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable members of our society. The report urges us to take positive intervention measures to counter these distressing trends, re-enforcing the importance of community outreach and support systems.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the report acknowledges the ongoing 5 Year reform and restructure project undertaken by the Fiji Police Force. This commitment to evolution demonstrates a forward-thinking approach that ensures the Force remains adaptable and effective in a rapidly changing environment. The Committee’s recommendation for the Fiji Police Force to provide a gender desegregated data and develop a gender policy is commendable. In a society that values equity this step will not only enhance transparency but also allow us to access the progress of gender related initiatives effectively.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is evident from the Committee’s analysis the report serves as a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening the Fiji Police Force and ensuring its alignment with our nation’s goals. In addressing these issues, we are demonstrating our commitment for the wellbeing of our citizens and prosperity of our society. Moreover, I wish to address the concerns raised about

decline in customer service after change of government. While change can sometimes bring challenges, I am confident that lessons learnt from this report will enable us to maintain, even enhance the quality of customer service as we continuously work towards improvement.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would also like to add what my honourable colleague from the Opposition Chambers mentioned in respect to the protest march. I myself was one of those first MPs or Members of Parliament from the Opposition Chambers to join the protest march at around 9.30am. Unfortunately, I was removed from the march by the police officers, the excuse they gave was that I was an MP and I cannot be part of that protest or that march. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the end of the day I am still a citizen and this is a violation of my right according to the Constitution under Freedom of Assembly, where “every person has the right, peaceably and unarmed to assemble, demonstrate, picket and to present petitions.”

Mr. Speaker, Sir, also to highlight that previously I think in 2017 politicians were also part of demonstrations or marches and at the same time, our former Attorney-General, former Minister for Climate Change, the former Prime Minister were also removed from the vicinity where the march or protest came to a conclusion because they were politicians according to the police. Mr. Speaker, Sir, these are a violation of our rights. If we cannot represent the people’s voice and those two gentlemen who are no longer in Parliament, they are citizens of Fiji as well. They have every right to protest, they have every right to be part of every movement that is happening in Fiji.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there has been an increase in crime rate as I have highlighted on my political social media page. There is a temple in Lautoka which has been broken into five times according to this temples’ post - they have said, five times since this year. The police are not taking any effective action and I am happy to provide the Minister with the relevant details. There have been complaints where police are not taking action with respect to complaints lodged with them and I have highlighted this to the Minister recently.

In closing Mr. Speaker, Sir, I extend my gratitude to the Committee for their diligence and thorough analysis of the Fiji Police Reports performance and I also commend the Commissioner of Police, Officers and the staff for their dedication to securing our nation by embracing the findings and recommendations of this report. We are fostering a safe and more inclusive and more prosperous Fiji for all citizens, and I support this motion Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am speaking in support of this review report as I am also a Member of the Standing Committee. The Report itself is a few years old and if we would like to talk about the Report, we really will not be able to fully understand what this Report is all about but it is very important for us to understand the 2018 and 2019 Report in the sense that it was one of the key platforms or years that the Fiji Police had wanted to use as the basis of establishing a firm based in trying to reform and improve the Fiji Police Force. This was in line with the five-year reform and restructure plan set by the organisation the Fiji Police Force.

The whole purpose of the reform programme was really to improve the Fiji Police Force. Align the Fiji Police Force to the changing, policing environment involving times and above all most importantly to ensure that the organisation or the Fiji Police Force was properly equipped, resourced and positive to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am emphasising the importance of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are many things that are happening right now in our part of the world that really our Fiji Police Force are not able to handle because they are not properly resourced.

As someone that had the honour of serving in the Fiji Police Force for a few years it is a tough mission and I admire and respect the Commissioner and his officers who are serving right now. I remembered one of the first things that I did when I took over the office in 2010, I stated very clearly

to the organisation, especially the senior officers, I stated, I am here to improve the Fiji Police Force. And to do that we must rid of politics of race. We must rid of politics, of religion and we must rid of politics of empire building.

And that is something that I believe needs to be changed within the Force. It is got to be based on merit, the ability to perform and above all the ability to serve the people which is really the core purpose of the Force. People are centred in everything that they do.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are 1,001 things that needs to be done in the Force if we reduce it, we can say may be there is 101 things. In my view, perhaps we should focus on the 11 key things which the honourable Minister is being talking about in restoring blue. You can use any colour coded terminology or themes but at the end of the day it is about the ability of the Force to remain trusted and be trusted by the public or society at large.

Secondly, they must spend time and resource to professionalise their leaders and this particular case I am calling for I am sure the honourable Minister is already working on it a success planning for the leadership part of the Force.

Thirdly, the importance of really providing what they need to have resourced to confront the issues that they have to be confronted with on a daily basis.

We need to fast track some of the programmes or projects that are part of the plans and push them forward. And above all the ability to look after the officers' men and women of the Force.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in my own observation, I think I believe the Fiji Police Force is on track in serving the people of Fiji better provided that we resource them fully. We equip them and posture them fully to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I fully support the recommendation and I am sure when we debate the other two reports that will be submitted later here, we will fully understand the needs of the Fiji Police Force. And I call on the Members of this august House to understand the role of the Fiji Police Force, support them fully and of course resource and equip them to meet the challenges of their work.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will try to be brief. I thank the honourable Members and the honourable Minister for providing a very detailed explanation as to what the Ministry is engaging at the moment, to reform the Police Force in a way that is responsive, efficient and effective in dealing with the people generally, of course, reducing the crime rate.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is important for us to say this. In many ways, the Police Force over the last so many years was politicised to some extent. The Police Force was also kind of politically weaponised to engage at a political level to be off track in addressing the fundamental issues. The honourable Minister highlighted some of the issues that confront the Force at the moment. I know the honourable Naivalurua has made a very important set of points about what the Police Force ought to be, what the Police Force was and can be and what it is, and I agree with him wholeheartedly that it is the way in which the Police Force ought to operate.

He talked about resources. I agree with him 100 percent. If you look at the 2018 – 2019 Budget Sir, the allocation was \$193.5 million, but the actual amount that was utilised was only \$150.3 million which is about 78 percent of the allocation. In this year's Budget, Sir, we have allocated about \$183.7 million and of this around 94 percent of the Budget is allocated for operating expenditure while only 3 percent is earmarked for capital projects.

As part of the budgetary process Sir, we have made sure that the Police Force is adequately resourced. We have provided additional funding for Police Beat because we believe that police presence is very important in crime deterrence generally. Apart from the technological advancements, drones and CCTV cameras, police presence is very important, especially in densely populated areas around Suva, Nausori and other urban centres.

I am not sure Mr. Speaker, Sir, where they are reading those statistics. Yes, I get complaints about police. I get complaints about crime rates in different areas. I was in Vanua Levu and I met the Police and I asked the community generally, basically, they told me that the crime rate in Labasa is very low. In fact, they see an improvement. There are areas in the Central Division where it seems to have increased, there are more incidents of robbery, petty theft; but the overall statistics that has been provided by the Commissioner of Police recently shows that the overall crime rate has actually gone down.

Some of the honourable Members on the other side; honourable Virendra Lal and honourable Ketan Lal. I have talked about increasing crime rate, but they need to put it into a proper perspective and put that in the context of what the police is saying as to what is happening.

I was actually quite surprised Mr. Speaker, Sir, that they were complaining about the march. I do not know what the condition of the permit was. I know they were NGOs, in fact some them that I talked to, they said we did not want FijiFirst Members of Parliament with their FijiFirst t-shirt and shirts turning up there and wanting to protest.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Usamate talks about hypocrisy ...

HON. K.K. LAL.- It is something ...

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- But that is actually quite shameful that not only the General Secretary of the FijiFirst Party, the former Prime Minister and all these people who know for years they scuttle, they stopped protest, peaceful marches in this country. In fact, they should thank the Coalition Government, thank the honourable Prime Minister for leading a Government which is fully committed to genuine democracy and allowing the protest.

(Honourable Members interject)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- In fact, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is actually ...

HON. K.K. LAL.- So wasteful..

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.-... quite shameful that they all ended up there with the FijiFirst t-shirts...

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Not all.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Oh, whatever and whoever they were there, Mr. Speaker. But the point is, (he is showing the Constitution) he probably does not understand what his bosses were trying to do with that Constitution. But, it is important that we, as the honourable Minister said quite rightly, that we want people to have the right to protest. We want to allow marches, but it has to be done within the law. For them to come and complain about not being out is actually quite hilarious.

The final point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that ...

HON. K.K. LAL.- The former Attorney-General and the former Prime Minister are citizens.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ...the point raised by honourable Naivalurua that the Police Force, as far as we are concerned, in terms of the budget, the utilisation and the allocation in the 2023 – 2024 Budget in our view, is adequate. As we move ahead, in terms of the review and the operation that the honourable Minister talked about, we would be looking at additional support for the Police Force in the next Budget.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, just one point. When we did the deliberations and when we read the Annual Report, there is nothing there that said the Police Force was being politicised otherwise you would have seen in the Report that we produced.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank those that contributed to the debate. I thank the team for coming up with this report. We have four new members in the team, Sir, new Members of Parliaments, so we have to learn on the job in the absence of induction and training on how Committee works. If I may, Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank the Fiji Police Force for the work that they do, their line of work exposes them to the ugly side of humanity, and they need our support. With their families also for the support that they provide to them, and I implore the Police to continue their work to act justly and fairly as they do the very important work that they do for the nation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I commend this Report to Parliament for noting.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

## **REVIEW REPORT – CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF FIJI 2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That Parliament debates the Review of the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji 2020 Annual Report which was tabled on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2023.

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

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF), is the national agency for aviation safety and security oversight of Fiji's aviation industry. Their mandate is to regulate, certify and licence airline, airport operators, traffic navigation and security service providers, pilots, aircraft engineers, air traffic controllers, technicians and air cargo operators.

In 2020, the work commenced on the review of their primary legislation, pertaining to the work of civil aviation. This was the Civil Aviation Act 1976, the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji's Act 1979 and the Civil Aviation Reform Act 1999. The objective of the review was to amalgamate into one document all of the civil aviation primary legislations, except for the security aspects of civil aviation. This was to ensure that all International Civil Aviation Organisations (ICAO) protocol questions relating to primary legislations were adequately addressed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, CAAF has responded to the Committee's recommendation. The responses

are as follows:

1. Recommendation 4.1: Establishment of the management of the database. According to CAAF, it is of high priority and the coordination has been underway since 2022, with neighbouring civil aviation authorities to ensure that CAAF is able to leverage the best suited system for our operations. With the recently appointed CAAF Board, approval to move this project forward is planned to be presented at their second Board meeting this year.
2. Recommendation 4.2: The Job Evaluation Exercise (JEE) was completed by the maximise at the end of 2022. The final report was to be submitted to the CAAF Board in its first meeting of this year. It is envisaged that the direction will be provided by the Board at this meeting for further implementation.
3. Recommendation 4.3: CAAF as part of its safety awareness, publishes information on mandatory occurrence reports on the CAAF website in its quarterly aviation safety bulletins. In addition, awareness on this is provided during industry awareness meetings audits and inspections. CAAF will continue to advocate for a robust and non-punitive reporting culture to ensure reports are forthcoming on any issues in the aviation system and any issues in the aviation system is adequately identified and promptly addressed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I take my seat, I would also like to congratulate the first female CEO recently appointed, Ms. Theresa Maria O'Boyle Levestam.

MR. SPEAKER.- The floor is now open for debate. The batting will be led off by the honourable Viam Pillay, then to be followed by the Deputy Prime Minister, honourable Viliame Gavoka and rounded off by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Manoa Kamikamica.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to support the Committee Report before Parliament. The Committee Report on the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji's 2020 Annual Report contains a few findings that the Committee have also made as its recommendations to Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF). This includes:

- establishing a management database as part of its strategic aim to digitise its modus operandi to enhance its service delivery;
- completing its job evaluation exercise and accordingly remunerate its staff to enable greater staff retention;
- continuing to educate and undertake awareness of mandatory occurrence, reporting amongst aviation operators and ensure the implementation of robust reporting culture and corresponding practices.

Those recommendations by the Committee aim to improve the Authority's operations and enhance its service delivery to the public.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Report also stated that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on Fiji Airports, Fiji Airways and the entire aviation industry. The closure of borders and the travel restrictions implemented had a flow-on effect on the Authority as some small private aerodrome operators established to service private resorts temporary closed their operations which impacted revenue received by the Authority in aerodrome certification fees. To provide relief, the Government allocated a \$2.5 million grant to CAAF for the 2020-2021 year to make up for the shortfall and enable the continuous discharge of the Authority's function as required by the Civil Authority of Fiji Act 1979.

Additionally, CAAF provided waivers for certain fees and charges to aviation operators including Fiji Airports and Fiji Airways to assist them through these unprecedented times. Mr. Speaker, Sir, CAAF also undertook the job evaluation exercise which is the process to evaluate the roles and the responsibilities of each staff and determine their relative worth within the organisation. This exercise is important because it helps to ensure that staff are appropriately compensated for their work and that the Authority can now track and retain talented employees. By completing the job evaluation exercise, CAAF will be better equipped to remunerate its staff accordingly and enable greater staff retention as recommended by the Committee.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the Report on the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji 2020 Annual Report. I would like also to acknowledge the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for its deliberations. If you will allow me, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am just quite pleased with the last Report that was presented by the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, a Chairman that goes to the Opposition Party. It is quite a change in the way we do things in this country now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because for eight years, nothing like that ever came our way.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Oh! Correction, correction!

HON. J. USAMATE.- Talk about CAAF. It is history now.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- In 2014, the Chairman for the Public Accounts Committee was given to honourable Prof. Biman Prasad but very soon after that they fired him, they got rid of him. So, this is a new Fiji, a democracy and Parliament democracy at its best.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hogwash!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I know you are welcome to more going down the line, honourable Members.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as indicated by my colleague honourable Bainivalu, I also wish to congratulate Mrs. Theresa Levestam as a newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji. She was Fiji's first licensed female Air Traffic Controller, the CAAF Executive and now the first Chief Executive of CAAF.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- *Vinaka.*

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, CAAF is an independent statutory authority established under the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979. In actual fact that Act is quite outdated and we are looking at revising it in keeping with the requirements of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Sir, CAAF is responsible for ensuring the safety and security regulations of Civil Aviation Authority in Fiji and the operation of Fiji registered aircraft outside of our territory. For Fiji, the aviation sector plays an integral role in Fiji's economy and so do the stakeholders including our airline, airports and CAAF.

Prior to this Government, Mr. Speaker, CAAF was under the Solicitor-General, about five staff, an important sector like this was kind of shelved away under the Solicitor-General. The Coalition Government decided to form a standalone Ministry, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil



Aviation and it brought everyone together into the Ministry.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Just to accommodate you.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- For Fiji, the aviation sector plays an integral role in Fiji's economy and so do the key stakeholders including our airline, airports and CAAF.

In the year under review 2020, CAAF was significantly impacted by the pandemic and its border closure, and this was also the case for Fiji Airports and Fiji Airways. As noted in the Standing Committee Report, with the significant decline in international air travel, the Authority's share of the Airport Departure Tax which accounted for approximately 61 percent of the annual revenue diminished. This is significant with a strong recovery of travel and gradual increase in departure tax, CAAF will continue to serve as mandated efficiently.

For the information of the House, departure tax is divided into 75 percent for general treasury, 10 percent for Fiji Airports Limited, 5 percent for CAAF and 10 percent for Environmental Levy. That is how we divide the departure tax.

One of the management priorities of CAAF in 2020 was to recruit a Chief Executive Officer which has now been done. We also have a new board under the very able leadership of Mr. Eliki Kaumaitotoya. He was an engineer, trained by Qantas and also one of the leading players in the setup of Air Terminal Services (ATS).

Fiji's effective implement in ratings determined by the International Civil Aviation Organization on aviation safety and security oversight systems have ranked us above the global and regional average. Sir, ICAO carries out this rating on a very regular basis and we cannot be under the average or below what is required internationally, Mr. Speaker. To this stage we are doing very well, Sir. This has resulted in the ICAO Council President Certificate being awarded to Fiji during the 41<sup>st</sup> ICAO Assembly in Montreal, Canada in 2022. This award is a recognition of the efforts of CAAF staff (past and present) as well as the Fiji Aviation Industry in effectively implementing ICAO standards and recommended practices.

When international borders as such, CAAF worked with industry partners to ensure essential air transportations such as repatriation and cargo flights continued. For a sector as heavily regulated as aviation, their role was absolutely critical, and in doing so, CAAF continued to meet international civil aviation requirements in new COVID-19 protocols.

As Fiji opened its international borders, CAAF's role was even more critical in ensuring that our aviation industry was ready for a safe restart and recovery of international civil aviation. Sir, ICAO COVID-19 initiatives such as the aerodrome restart and public health corridor implementation packages were engaged.

Despite CAAF's limited human resources, it continued to maintain a healthy level of safety and security oversight all throughout the COVID and post-COVID periods. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we will continue to ensure Fiji is not only compliant with ICAO but we leverage the expertise in the Pacific. We help our Pacific neighbours a lot in aviation.

Following a call for bids in 2022 from ICAO member states to host the ICAO Pacific Small Island Developing States Liaison Officer (PLO), Fiji has been chosen as the host of this prestigious office. The host state agreement was signed in Seoul Korea during the global implementations in June this year which I attended.

The PLO is expected to take up office here in Fiji from November 2023. No more do we have to go to Bangkok for ICAO matters. It is going to be based right here in Nadi.

I also want to point out that the organisation has a good gender balance with a female workforce of 42 percent. For a traditionally male dominated industry, this is a great achievement. Achievements do not come without their challenges, CAAF over the years has faced the biggest challenge in recruitments and retention of technical expertise. We are losing our people....

HON. K.K. LAL.- Why?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- They are poached by people from around the Pacific and even outside of the region.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Because of Government's inconsistencies.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- It is not unique to Fiji, it is all over the world. Indeed, in the conference that I attended in Korea, one of the thematic areas was the training of the national government to be part of the training programmes to train aviation experts and they are doing that in Fiji now with FNU.

There are several vacancies that remain unfilled despite numerous efforts to recruit. This was also highlighted in the annual report. I thank the honourable Minister for Finance for providing CAAF...

HON. K.K. LAL.- Former Minister?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- ...with its full needs for resources to enable you to hire people that we need. The staff job evaluation exercise that was underway in 2022 has since been completed and implemented. We also look at other strategies to recruit and retain critical skills, some of which we are addressing through CAAF to increase its budget allocation for 2023-2024 financial year to \$5 million.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we also modernise our laws to reflect a modern sector. The review of primary aviation legislation is long overdue, and this is a project that CAAF hopes to see to completion by the end of this year. This will be followed by a review of the secondary legislation, the Air Navigation Regulation 1981 in line with international best practices.

As aviation continues to evolve, CAAF will ensure it remains ahead. It is now more important than ever that CAAF accelerates its plans for digitisation. Work has commenced with the upgrade of ICT systems. Fiji's safety programme first published in 2012 is being reviewed to develop Fiji's National Aviation Safety Plan in line with the Revised State Safety Programme. This programme will ensure that Fiji's Civil Aviation system is able to evolve and remain relevant and sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji's obligation as a signatory to the Chicago Convention is vested in CAAF as such, CAAF will continue to provide a strong, safety and security oversight system.

MR. SPEAKER.- There has been a slight change in the listing that we have here, so honourable Ketan Lal will now speak before it is being rounded off by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister Kamikamica.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will speak on the report first and then later I will counter the comments by the honourable Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister number two.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I stand before you again to express my support for the Report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the Review of the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji 2020 Annual Report. This comprehensive report underscores the vital role that the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji named CAAF plays in the aviation industry and its commendable effort in navigating the unprecedented challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the aviation industry, a cornerstone of global connectivity and economic growth faced an unparalleled crisis in the year 2020. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the international passenger traffic was staggering causing a significant drop in aircraft movement. Despite these challenges, CAAF demonstrated a remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in sustaining its operations, thanks in part to a Government grant of \$2.5 million. This financial support ensured that the Authority could continue its essential functions even in the face of international travel.

One of the pivotal points raised in the Report is CAAF's initiative to establish a management database. This ambitious project aims to streamline operations and hence, service delivery and automate critical processes, the pandemic induced revenue constraints, delayed its implementation, but the intent behind this endeavour is commendable.

This database is designed to integrate various standalone databases will undoubtedly facilitate seamless information flow and contribute to more efficient decision making. Furthermore, the inclusion of an e-examination and e-licensing system exemplifies CAAF's commitment to embracing technological achievements for the betterment of the aviation industry.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Report also addresses the matter of few waivers granted to Fiji Airways and Airports Fiji Limited due to the pandemic's adverse impact and with that, I must congratulate Fiji Airways for getting the new A350s which was an achievement of the FijiFirst Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this measured approach highlights the Authority's sensitivity to the needs of the broader aviation community and its willingness to provide relief during challenging times. The meticulous explanation of the legal basis for such waivers under the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Act 1979 showcases the Authority's adherence to establish regulations and its transparent decision-making processes.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Report acknowledges CAAF's prudent response to the decline in international air travel and its subsequent impact on revenue. The Authority's decision to operate in a mode at its judicious utilisation of a Government grant to mitigate losses is both commendable and responsible. This approach not only reflects fiscal prudence but also embodies the spirit of solidarity as it safeguards the interest of the aviation industry, the workers and by extension to Fiji's broader economy.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I applaud the Standing Committee for Social Affairs for its insightful Review of the Civil Aviation Authority Report 2020. The recommendations put forth in the Report are substantive and forward looking from advocating in completion of the management database system to emphasising the significance of staff retention and fostering a robust reporting culture. These recommendations underscore the Authority's commitment to continuous improvement and growth.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the aviation sector is not just about aeroplanes and runways. It is about connecting people, fostering economic prosperity and promoting national pride. The CAAF's dedication to upholding these values even in the face of unprecedented challenge is a testament and its resilience vision and commitment to Fiji's future.

I implore my colleagues to support the motion at hand and before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I was commenting on some of the comments made by the honourable Minister himself. This Report is for 2020 when the Civil Aviation Authority was just a department, but currently it is a ministry on its own. So, these achievements are under the achievements of the former Minister and former Attorney-General, Mr. Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum. At the same time, I must also congratulate the new CEO as highlighted by them, who is also a woman, but I must also say that our Local Government CEO's appointed from the women community, and at the same time, I ask Parliament to support the Report before us.

MR. SPEAKER.- Just to remind you that I also once served in that ministerial position.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I know we have been sitting late, so I will endeavour to be short and swift. Firstly, on behalf of the 55 Members of Parliament, I would just like to on behalf of all of us again congratulate the Fiji Water Flying Fijians for a wonderful performance today. If there is any doubt in the world where Fiji Rugby is today, it is headed for tier one status and I would like to make a prediction, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the World Cup, the Webb Ellis trophy will be in Fiji very soon.

HON. MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Sir, allow me to just talk about two other issues before I delve into the Report. I sympathise with our colleagues about their pre-occupation with our decision to use Standing Order 51. I thought I would be just very clear and assure them that we are not doing it because we disregard the process, it is simply because we need to move fast. We are trying to fix the messes of 16 years.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Talk to the motion.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- So to our colleagues on the other side and to the public of Fiji, bear with us. Very soon, we will revert to due process, but right now, there is a lot of mess to fix up.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the third point I would like to make very quickly is I know that the honourable Ketan Lal talked about the achievements of Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji but being a practitioner from Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji, there used to be something bothered me greatly when I was looking at aviation management from a far.

One was mentioned by the honourable colleague of mine honourable Gavoka that the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji is the most important entity in our economy. It manages the largest industry in Fiji but was shoved aside into a Department under the Solicitor-General's Office and under resourced. As they say in Ra "*e wara me so 'a*" - there was a lot of incongruence between the loud voices and what we could see as a practitioner.

The second thing Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am so glad, and I would like to congratulate my honourable colleague the Deputy Prime Minister for finally confirming Theresa Maria O'Boyle Levestam into the position of the CEO of Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji.

Before this appointment Mr. Speaker, Sir, she was acting for three years and prior to that, the gentleman in this report they say that it was tabled by another acting CEO of Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji. Mr. Speaker, Sir, whilst we are thankful for the report, I am so relieved that someone who knows about Civil Aviation, is actually in charge of Civil Aviation and starting to clean up the mess that is actually there.

Finally, in talking to the motion at hand Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to congratulate the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for their wonderful report. They made some very good points around three recommendations Sir, which I support - the importance of a database is fundamental in any management, and I am very happy that it was actually being recommended. In terms of the Job Evaluation Exercise, just to educate the guys on the other side when honourable Gavoka talked about loss of skills, they asked why? If you are not aware....

HON. C.J. SINGH.- You do not know!

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- I think they do not know. If you are not aware, the people that enter Civil Aviation are some of the most skilful people in this country, in the area of aviation - they are in high demand, and not only marketable in our country but globally as well, so that is why you will see high turnover.

It is quite important, and I am glad that the Job Evaluation Report has been done, because what it will do is perhaps reward the existing officers in CAAF properly and allow to slow down what has been the normal occurrence in terms of turn over.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I note that the CAAF's continues commitment to Mandatory Occurrence Reporting. Again, for those of you who are not aware of what this is, this is one of the most important reports in aviation Mandatory Occurrence Reporting - it actually allows you to assess critical issues, risk issues before they actually blow up in your face. So, I am so glad that Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji is taking it very seriously and I was not aware they now publish it. I would like to congratulate them because it builds a very safe and very solid authority which we need for our largest industry in our country.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with those few words I would like to support the report and thank the Committee for their contributions with this report.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, given that I have spoken on the recommendations of the Committee and the responses to the recommendations by the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji, we have also heard the thoughts from honourable Members that have been exchanged across the floor, so with that Mr. Speaker, I have no further comments.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of our sitting today. I thank you all for your contributions. Parliament is now adjourned until 9.30 a.m. tomorrow.

The Parliament adjourned at 8.51 p.m.



## ANNEXURE I

Reply to Written Question No. 99/2023 tabled on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 by the Minister for Education, honourable Aseri M. Radrodro (Ref. Page: 1637)



**MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION**  
Honourable Aseri M. Radrodro

**RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTION NO. 99/2023 BY HON. HEM CHAND**

Hon. Hem Chand to ask the Minister for Education –

As a result of the shortage of qualified teachers in the Early Childhood Education, Primary Schools and Special Needs Schools can the Minister provide the following information to Parliament –

- (a) total roll of schools for the current year;
- (b) provide statistics on the number of teachers required perschool;
- (c) number of teachers that resigned; and
- (d) number of vacancies for Early Childhood Education, Primary Schools and Special Needs Schools?

The response to each item as raised by honourable Hem Chand is tabulated for easy referencing. The information and data given below is sourced from FEMIS as of 8<sup>th</sup> September, 2023.

- (a) The total roll of schools for the current year, the information tabulated below is the summary of the total roll as per district.

Table (i): **ECE, Primary, Secondary & Special Education Total Roll**

Education District	ECE	Primary	Secondary	Special Education	Grand Total
Ba-Tavua	1,205	10,046	5,425	116	16,792
Cakaudrove	1,529	10,868	4,149	35	16,581
Eastern	1,124	8,170	2,554	20	11,868
Lautoka-Yasawa	3,626	28,205	13,422	418	45,671
Macuata-Bua	1,823	14,608	7,302	89	23,822
Nadroga-Navosa	1,272	10,591	4,232	66	16,161
Nausori	3,602	26,409	12,958	65	43,034
Ra	927	6,015	2,752	33	9,727
Suva	4,061	38,432	19,734	398	62,625
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>19,169</b>	<b>153,344</b>	<b>75,528</b>	<b>1,240</b>	<b>246,281</b>

Table (ii): **ECE, Primary & Special Education Total Roll**

Education District	ECE	Primary	Special Education	Total Students
Ba-Tavua	1,205	10,046	116	11,367
Cakaudrove	1,529	10,868	35	12,432
Eastern	1,124	8,170	20	9,314
Lautoka-Yasawa	3,626	28,205	418	32,249
Macuata-Bua	1,823	14,608	89	16,520
Nadroga-Navosa	1,272	10,591	66	11,929
Nausori	3,602	26,409	65	30,076
Ra	927	6,015	33	6,915
Suva	4,061	38,432	398	42,891
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>19,169</b>	<b>153,344</b>	<b>1,240</b>	<b>173,753</b>

(b) Tabulated information is provided below o the number of teachers required per school as per establishment and the vacancies that are yet to be filled.

- Please note that number of teachers required per school cannot be ascertained as this will depend on school size. Within school classification size, the number of teaches per school will again differ depending on school roll.

(c) Number of teachers that have resigned.

- Total No. of Resignation is 454 from January to June 2023.

Exist by Month	Admin	ECE	Primary	Secondary	VOE	Grand Total
<b>January</b>	1	7	31	68		107
Retirement			1			1
Deceased			3	2		5
Resignation	1	7	26	66		100
Retirement on Medical Grounds			1			1
<b>February</b>		3	24	38		65
Deceased			3			3
Resignation		3	21	38		62
<b>March</b>	5	8	29	40	1	83
Deceased	1	1	1	2		5
Resignation	4	7	28	38	1	78
<b>April</b>	6	5	25	25		61
Deceased			1	1		2
Deemed Resignation				1		1
Resignation	6	5	24	23		58
<b>May</b>		6	43	41		90
Deceased			1			1
Resignation		6	42	41		89
<b>June</b>	5	7	29	31		72
Resignation	3	7	28	29		67
Deceased	2	0	1	2		5
<b>Grand Total</b>	15	36	178	238	1	478

(d) Number of vacancies for Special Schools, ECE & Primary is tabulated below:

	No. Of School	Establishment	No. of Position Filled	Vacancy	Re
Special Schools	20	184	172	12	• 13 special



					schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 inclusive schools</li> <li>• 12 vacancies. Most of these vacancies are in rural/remote due to unavailability of quarters</li> </ul>
ECE	863	1,405	1,386	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 62/81 of the new positions has been filled, new graduates.</li> <li>• Student ratio which 1:15-20.</li> <li>• Most of these vacancies are in rural/remote due to unavailability of quarters (Please see appendix)</li> </ul>
Primary	736	6,415	6,231	184	New graduates, re-engaged retirees and no job-no job (Please see appendix)

### List No Job No Job

	Total number	Re-engage
ECE	22	5
Primary	105	63
Secondary	63	51
Non Teaching	7	nil

### New Recruit of Teachers

2021	Total		2022	Total		2023	Total
ECE	11		ECE	175		ECE	96
Special Inclusive Education	1		Special Inclusive Education	14		Special Inclusive Education	6
Primary	172		Primary	501		Primary	303
Secondary	121		Secondary	232		Secondary	164
Total	305		Total	922		Total	569
						Above is as of 11/08/2023	

Classification	No. of Classroom Teachers Recruited				
	2021		2022		
	# applied	# in the pool	# applied	# in the pool	# applied
CT Primary	868	289	487	199	686
CT Secondary	2250	695	249	103	1424
CT Special	153	14	100	7	78
CT ECE	757	261	not advertised		377
Total	4028	1259	836	309	2565



## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, HERITAGE AND ARTS

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### **CIRCULAR**

**From:** Acting Permanent Secretary for Education, Heritage and Arts

**To:** All School Heads, School Management, Divisional and District Offices

**Ref:** HRM-DOO2

**Date:** 17 March 2020

**SUBJECT: CONFIRMATION AND 'FREEZING' OF CURRENT PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSIFICATIONS**

- 1) In December 2017, School Heads, School Management, Divisional and District Offices were informed via Circular (C103-17), that primary schools were to be classified as Small, Medium or Large based on the number of teaching staff in the school.
- 2) SMALL primary schools were classified as those schools that had 7 teachers or less and had no AHT; MEDIUM primary schools were classified as those schools that had 8-25 teachers including one AHT; and LARGE primary schools were classified as those schools that had over 26 teachers and two AHTs.
- 3) Since 2017, Executive-approved changes to some schools' classifications have occurred. In addition, many schools have been allocated additional teachers. As a result, under the current 'teacher-only' criteria, there has become a lack of equity and/or consistency for a number of primary schools within the primary classifications system.
- 4) Since 2017, Executive-approved changes to some schools' classifications have occurred. In addition, many schools have been allocated additional teachers. As a result, under the current 'teacher-only' criteria, there has become a lack of equity and/or consistency for a number of primary schools within the primary classifications system.

Classification	HT Band	AHT/s	Criteria
SMALL	H	0	Has up to 210 students <b>OR</b> upto 7 teachers
MEDIUM	I	1	Has student range from 211-779 <b>AND</b> 8-25 teachers
LARGE	J	2	Has greater than 780 students <b>OR</b> 26 teachers or more

- 5) For a list of primary schools and their classifications, please refer to Appendix I, Lists A, Band C.
- 6) Schools that have asterisks\*\* should note that they fall outside of the interim criteria. MEHA will consult these schools for clarification regarding staff and student numbers over Terms I and 2 of 2020. In the short term however, and at least until the commencement of the new financial year on 1st August, no school classifications will change.
- 7) Note that Special and Inclusive Education schools are currently under longer-term review and no adjustments have been, or will be, made to their current classification until completion of this review.
- 8) With these lists now issued, and until further notice, all classifications will remain 'frozen' whilst

MEHA further investigates the primary school classification process throughout the 2020 school year.

- 9) Additionally, and during 2020, MEHA through the Primary Directorate, will complete a full review of the school classifications process for primary schools and will develop the process for applying for reclassification.

Enquiries relating to this Circular should be addressed to the Primary Director at [hem.chand@vnet.gov.fj](mailto:hem.chand@vnet.gov.fj) or on 322 0494.

*Alj*

**Susan Kiran (Ms.)**  
Acting Permanent Secretary

**APPENDIX 1-LIST A**  
**LARGE PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

#	CODE	SCHOOL NAME	HT Band
1.	1005	St Thomas Primary School	J
2.	1050	Andrews Primary School	J
3.	1058	Votualevu Public School	J
4.	1062	Korovuto Primary School	J
5.	1063	Lautoka Methodist	J
6.	1066	Mount Saint Marys Primary School**	J
7.	1070	Namosau Methodist School	J
8.	1076	Nadi Sangam School	J
9.	1094	Lautoka Muslim Primary	J
10.	1243	Khemendra Central Primary School	J
11.	1624	Saint Mary's Primarv School	J
12.	1747	Sigatoka Methodist Primary School	J
13.	1840	Dilkusha Boys School	J
14.	1841	Dilkusha Girls School	J
15.	1849	Bhawani Dayal Mem. Primary School	J
16.	1852	Nasinu Muslim Primarv	J
17.	1862	St John Bosco Primary School.	J
18.	1874	Nasinu Sanoam School	J
19.	2302	Veiuto Primary School	J
20.	2310	Marist Brothers Primary School	J
21.	2312	Marcellin Primary School	J
22.	2314	Suva Methodist Primary School	J
23.	2321	Annesley Methodist Infant School	J
24.	2325	Delainamasi Government School	J
25.	2326	Nabua Primary School	J
26.	2332	Holy Trinity Anglican School	J
27.	2333	St Agnes Primary School	J
28.	2335	Assemblies of God Primarv School	J
29.	2340	Arva Samai Primarv School	J
30.	2341	Tamavua Primarv School	J
31.	2343	Samabula Primary School**	J

32.	2345	Suva Muslim Primary School	J
33.	2346	Rishikul Primary School	J
34.	2348	Mahatma Gandhi Memorial School	J
35.	2354	Gospel Primary School	J
36.	2355	Nehru Memorial School**	J
37.	2361	Lami Primary School**	J
38.	2369	John Wesley Primary**	J
39.	2410	Rampur Primary School	J
40.	2411	Vashist Muni Memorial School	J
41.	2501	Nausori Primarv School	J
42.	2555	Vuci Methodist School**	J
43.	3008	Nadi Airoort School	J
44.	3012	Lautoka Andhra Sanaam School**	J
45.	3013	Namaka Public School	J
46.	3028	Lautoka Primarv School	J
47.	3043	Lautoka School for Soecial Education	J
48.	3047	Sunshine Soecial School	J
49.	3059	Lautoka Central Primary	J
50.	9862	Newtown Christian Primary School	J

**APPENDIX 1-LIST B**  
**MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

#	CODE	SCHOOL NAME	HT Band
1.	1001	Drasa Avenue School	I
2.	1002	Rarawai FSC Primary School**	I
3.	1003	Vatukoula Convent School	I
4.	1006	Toko Primary School	I
5.	1012	Lautoka Delana Primary School	I
6.	1013	Magodro District School	I
7.	1015	Nadi District School	I
8.	1021	Nawaka District School	I
9.	1023	Sabeto District School	I
10.	1025	Tavua District School	I
11.	1026	Vaturu District School.	I
12.	1027	Vatukoula Primary School	I
13.	1030	Vuda District School	I
14.	1034	Ratu Rusiate Nabuta Mem. School	I
15.	1041	Nukuloa Sanatan Dharm School	I
16.	1043	Amichandra Memorial School	I
17.	1047	Shri A D Patel Memorial School	I
18.	1051	Arya Kanya Pathshala	I
19.	1054	Drasa Primary School	I
20.	1055	Karavi Public School**	I
21.	1056	Natabua Primary School	I
22.	1059	Gurukul Primary School	I
23.	1060	Jasoer Williams Primary	I
24.	1067	Mulomulo Primary School	I
25.	1072	Sabeto Central School	I
26.	1075	Lovu Sangam School	I

27.	1080	Ba Sangam Primarv School	I
28.	1081	Saint Teresa's School	I
29.	1082	Tavua Primary School	I
30.	1091	Veisaru Sanatan Dharam School	I
31.	1092	S G N Khalsa Primary School**	I
32.	1093	Varavu Muslim Primary	I
33.	1096	Ba Muslim Primary School	I
34.	1097	Viseisei Primary School	I
35.	1098	Sabeto Sangam School	I
36.	1100	Lautoka Zhong Hua Primary School	I
37.	1102	Dama District School**	I
38.	1103	Immaculate Conception Primary	I
39.	1106	Nadi District School**	I
40.	1207	Drekeniwai District School**	I
41.	1214	Niusawa Primarv School	I
42.	1217	Nasavusavu District School	I
43.	1218	Saint Andrews Primary School	I
44.	1220	Somosomo District School	I
45.	1221	Tawake District School**	I
46.	1223	Vunisalusalu Central School	I
47.	1230	Holy Cross Primary School	I
48.	1233	Banaban Primary School	I
49.	1240	Taveuni Central Sanatan Primarv	I
50.	1247	South Taveuni Primary School	I
51.	1251	Qalitu District School**	I
52.	1255	Vuanicau Primary School**	I
53.	1257	Saint Patrick Primarv School**	I
54.	1265	Navonu Primarv School** -	I
55.	1278	Nasavusavu Public School	I
56.	1306	Namalata Central School**	I
57.	1323	Ratu Varani Memorial School**	I
58.	1402	Ratu Alifereti Finau Memorial School**	I
59.	1410	Adi Maopa Primary School	I
60.	1441	Tovu Villaae School**	I
61.	1502	Levuka Public Primary School	I
62.	1536	Marist Convent Primary School	I
63.	1601	Labasa Primary School	I
64.	1619	Maramarua District School	I
65.	1625	Vunimoli Islamia School..	I
66.	1626	St Auausline Public School	I
67.	1627	Bulileka Sanatan Dharm School	I
68.	1628	Labasa Sanaam Primary School	I
69.	1629	Tabia S D Primary School	I
70.	1631	Vunika Primarv School	I
71.	1636	Batinikama Primary School	I
72.	1641	Seaqqa Primary School	I
73.	1651	Qawa Primary School	I
74.	1652	Valebasoga Public School	I - I
	1657	Nabekavu Primary School	

76.	1658	Holv Family Primary School	I
77.	1662	Guru Nanak Primary School	I
78.	1663	Bethel Primarv School	1
79.	1667	Qelemumu Primarv School..	I
80.	1678	Labasa School for Special Education	I
81.	1701	St Joan of Arc Primary School	I
82.	1707	Cuvu District School**	I
83.	1709	Naqalimare District School	I
84.	1710	Ratu Filise Memorial School	I
85.	1713	Namataku District School	I
86.	1717	Sigatoka District School	I
87.	1718	Tagaqe District School	I
88.	1744	Naidovi Primary School	I
89.	1745	Rahmatullah Khan Mem. School	I
90.	1748	Tuva Primary School	I
91.	1749	Korotogo Andhra Primary	I
92.	1752	Nadroga Sangam School	I
93.	1755	St Peter Channel Primary School	I
94.	1756	Kulukulu Public School	I
95.	1812	Kafabu Primary School	I
96.	1816	Sawani Villaoe School	I
97.	1828	Nabobuco District School	I
98.	1842	Koroaaaa Primary School	I
99.	1853	RAMBISSAR CHAUDHARY MEMORIAL SCHOOL	I
100.	1855	Lomaivuna Settlement School	I
101.	1863	Saraswati Primary Dilkusha School	I
102.	1864	Saint Joseph the Worker Primary School**	I
103.	1865	William Cross Primary School	I
104.	1868	Makoi Muslim Primary School	I
105.	1869	Bainivalu Primary School	I
106.	1885	J N Jokhan Memorial Primary School	I
107.	1909	Ro Camaisala Memorial School	I
108.	2006	Bureiwai District School**	I
109.	2011	Nailuva District School	I
110.	2035	Rakiraki Methodist School	I
111.	2036	Penang Sanoam Primary School	I
112.	2039	Vunikavikaloa Arva School	I
113.	2047	Liwativale Primary School**	I
114.	2052	Drauniivi Public School	I
115.	2107	Ratu Sauvoli Mem. School	I
116.	2111	Tooa District School	I
117.	2120	Nakaikogo S D School	I
118.	2306	Deenbandhoo Memorial School	I
119.	2307	Marist Convent School Lami	I
120.	2311	Saint Anne's Primary School	I
121.	2322	St. John's Primary School	I
122.	2324	Draiba Primary School	I
123.	2331	Stella Maris Primary School	I
124.	2334	Chauhan Memorial School	I

125.	2342	Dudley Intermediate School	I
126.	2344	Vatuwaqa Primary School -	I
127.	2347	Swami Shardhanand Memorial School	I
128.	2353	Tacirua Primary School	I
129.	2360	Yat Sen Primary School	I
130.	2365	Navesi Primary School	I
131.	2366	Hilton Special School	I
132.	2368	Bishop Kempthorne Memorial School	I
133.	2370	Suva Primary School	I
134.	2371	Suva S.D.A. Primary School	I
135.	2379	Pandit Vishnu Deo Memorial School	I
136.	2381	Suva Special School	I
137.	2382	Ro Delainamako Primary School	I
138.	2384	Or Ram Lakhan Memorial School	I
139.	2387	Fiii School for the Blind	I
140.	2388	Rishikul Nadera Primary School	I
141.	2391	Narere Primary School	I
142.	2395	Ahmadvva Muslim Primary School	I
143.	2396	Indira Gandhi Memorial Primary School	I
144.	2398	Nasinu Gospel Primary School	I
145.	2399	St. Thomas Aquinas Primary School	I
146.	2402	Ratu Latianara Memorial School	I
147.	2403	Lomary Catholic Primary School	I
148.	2502	Korovou Primary School	I
149.	2508	Dawasamu District School	I
150.	2509	Dravo District School	I
151.	2513	Lawaki District School	I
152.	2514	Nabitu District School	I
153.	2516	Nakelo District School	I
154.	2520	Namalata District School	I
155.	2525	Nausori District School	I
156.	2527	Wainibuka District School..	I
157.	2528	Nuku District School	I
158.	2533	VuQalei District School -	I
159.	2534	Waidalice District School..	I
160.	2550	Vunimono Arya School	I
161.	2551	Vunimono Islamia School	I
162.	2552	Krishna Vedic School	I
163.	2554	Vunimono Sanatan Dharam Primary School	I
164.	2556	Visama Sanatan Dharam School	I
165.	2565	Ratu Ravuama Vunivalu Mem. School	I
166.	2568	Saraswati Primary Manoca School	I
167.	2569	Ramakrishna Saraswati Primary School**	I
168.	2579	Wainibuku Hart Primary School	I
169.	3002	Sabeto Muslim Primary	I
170.	3019	Maigania Muslim Primary School	I
171.	3022	Tagore Memorial School	I
172.	3030	Mulomulo Muslim Primary School	I
173.	3031	Saru M G M Primary School	I

174.	3032	Nawaicoba Public School	I
175.	3035	Nadi Primary School	I
176.	3039	Ahmadiyya Muslim Primary School Lautoka	I
177.	3042	Savatu Primarv**	I
178.	3046	Gandhi Bhawan Primary	I
179.	3060	Lautoka Arya Samaj Primary	I
180.	3069	Nadi Muslim Primary School**	I
181.	3072	Lautoka S D A Primarv	I
182.	3073	Nadi Arva Samai Primarv	I
183.	3076	Ba School for Special Education	I
184.	9661	Nadi Centre for Special Education	I

#### APPENDIX 1-LIST C MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOLS

#	CODE	SCHOOL NAME	HT Band
1.	1007	Tavua Muslim Primary School	I
2.	1008	Dreketi Sangam School	H
3.	1009	Navoli Sangam School	H
4.	1010	Ratu Filimoni V Mem. School	H
5.	1011	Ratu Saimoni Raseru Memorial Primary School	H
6.	1014	Ratu Meli Memorial School	H
7.	1017	Naloto District School	H
8.	1018	Nalotawa District School	H
9.	1019	Navala Catholic School	H
10.	1020	Naviti District School	H
11.	1022	Rukuruku District School	H
12.	1024	Somolevu Catholic School	H
13.	1028	VitOQO District School	H
14.	1029	Votua Catholic School	H
15.	1031	Vunayasi District	H
16.	1032	Ratu Naivalu Memorial School	H
17.	1033	Ralete Primary School	H
18.	1035	Bukama Village School	H
19.	1036	Yaqeta Village School	H
20.	1037	Nadarivatu Primary School	H
21.	1038	Ratu Namasi Memorial School	H
22.	1039	Koronubu Sanoam School	H
23.	1040	Taoitagi Sangam School	H
24.	1042	Nadelei Catholic School	H
25.	1044	Shree Sanatan Dharm Kanya Pathshala	H
26.	1045	Balevuto Public School	H
27.	1048	D A V Primary School	H
28.	1052	Salata Primary School	H
29.	1053	Deshbandhu Vitogo School	H
30.	1061	Koronubu Sanatan Primary	H
31.	1064	Malamala Public School	H
32.	1065	Vasist Muni Memorial School	H
33.	1068	Nacaci Hindu School	H
34.	1069	Natawa Primary School	H



35.	1071	Rabulu Sanatan Primary School	H
36.	1073	Moto Sanatan Sammelan	H
37.	1074	Varavu Sanatan Dharm School	H
38.	1077	Raviravi Sangam School	H
39.	1078	Uciwai Sangam School	H
40.	1079	Vunisarnalao Sangam School	H
41.	1084	TOQO Primary School	H
42.	1085	Tavarau Primary School	H
43.	1086	Tuvu Primary School	H
44.	1087	Shri Ram Govind Memorial Primary School	H
45.	1088	Vakabuli Primary School	H
46.	1089	Shastri Memorial School	H
47.	1090	Vatulaulau Sanatan Dharm School	H
48.	1095	Navoli Sanatan Primary School	H
49.	1099	Bulolo Sanatan Dharm School	H
50.	1101	Bua District	H
51.	1104	Kubulau District School	H
52.	1105	Lekutu District School	H
53.	1107	Navakasiga District School	H
54.	1109	Naruwai Village School	H
55.	1110	Ratu Luke Memorial School	H
56.	1111	Yadua Village School	H
57.	1112	Vuya District School	H
58.	1113	Adi Eliane Primarv School	H
59.	1114	Wainunu Seventh Dav Adventist Primarv School	H
60.	1115	Namau Primarv School	H
61.	1116	Coboi Sanatan Dharam School	H
62.	1117	Koroinasolo VillaQe School	H
63.	1120	Nawailevu VillaQe School	H
64.	1130	Bua Primary School	H
65.	1131	Vunivau Primary School	H
66.	1132	Korokadi Primary School	H
67.	1133	Nasarawaqa Primary School	H
68.	1135	Waibunabuna Primary School	H
69.	1136	Ratu Emeri Catholic School	H
70.	1137	Baravi Primary School	H
71.	1138	Galoa Island Primary School	H
72.	1201	Kasavu Primary School	H
73.	1203	Natadra District School	H
74.	1204	Vatuvula Primarv School	H
75.	1205	Kama District School	H
76.	1206	Dawara District School	H
77.	1209	Laucala District School	H
78.	1210	Nakobo District School	H
79.	1211	Nasinu District School	H
80.	1212	Natewa District School	H
81.	1213	Naweni District School	H
82.	1216	Saqani District School	H
83.	1219	Sukanaivalu Memorial School	H

84.	1222	Tunuloa Catholic School	H
85.	1224	Buakonikai Primary School	H
86.	1225	Vuna District School	H
87.	1226	Wailevu East District School	H
88.	1227	Wailevu West District School	H
89.	1228	Wainikeli District School	H
90.	1231	Tacilevu Village School	H
91.	1232	Bouma District School	H
92.	1234	St Paul's Primarv School	H
93.	1235	Wairiki District School	H
94.	1236	SeseNolivoli District School	H
95.	1237	Nabua Primary School	H
96.	1238	Batibalavu District School	H
97.	1239	Wainiika District School	H
98.	1241	Muanivatu District School	H
99.	1242	Vunilagi Primary School	H
100.	1244	Domonisavu District	H
101.	1245	Tabiang Primary School	H
102.	1248	Vatuvonu S D A Primary	H
103.	1249	Kioa Island School	H
104.	1250	Kocoma Village School	H
105.	1253	Nagigi S D A Primary School	H
106.	1256	Naiviivi Primary School	H
107.	1258	Wailevu Primary School	H
108.	1259	Mabuco Catholic Primary School	H
109.	1261	Salialevu Primary School	H
110.	1262	Vunidawa Primary School	H
111.	1263	Viani Primary School	H
112.	1264	Vanuavou Primary School	H
113.	1266	Vuanisaiki Primary School	H
114.	1267	Ucunivatu Primary School	H
115.	1268	Qilo Island School	H
116.	1269	Navakawau Catholic School	H
117.	1270	Naoanivatu Primary School	H
118.	1275	Bainimarama Vatutoka Primary School	H
119.	1276	WaiboQi/Wainadiro Primary School	H
120.	1281	Labasa Muslim Primary School	H
121.	1301	Ratu Nacagilevu Memorial School	H
122.	1302	Kavala Bay Primary School	H
123.	1303	Nabukelevu District School	H
124.	1304	Naceva District School	H
125.	1307	Namara District School	H
126.	1308	Naseaai District School	H
127.	1309	Naqara District School	H
128.	1312	Tavuki District School	H
129.	1313	Vunisei District School	H
130.	1314	Vabea District School	H
131.	1315	Yale District School	H
132.	1316	Muani Villaoe School	H

133.	1317	Levuka Primary School	H
134.	1318	Eliki Memorial School	H
135.	1319	Drue Village School	H
136 .	1320	Tiliva Villaoe School	H
137.	1321	Nakasaleka District School	H
138.	1324	Yawe District School	H
139.	1325	Naivikadi Primary School	H
140.	1326	Galoa Village School	H
141.	1327	Natusara Primary School	H
142.	1328	Nabukelevu - I - Ra Primary School	H
143.	1329	Ravitaki District School	H
144.	1330	Bulou Dolele Memorial School	H
145 .	1331	Richmond Methodist Primarv School	H
146.	1332	Vacalea Primary School	H
147.	1333	Dravuni Primary School	H
148.	1370	Lewa S D A School	H
149 .	1401	Daliconi Primarv School	H
150 .	1403	Mavana District School	H
151.	1404	Naroi District School	H
152.	1405	Uluiqafau District School	H
153.	1406	Oneata District School	H
154.	1407	Onolevu District School	H
155 .	1408	Maloku District School	H
156.	1409	Nayau District School	H
157.	1411	Uciwai District School	H
158.	1412	Vulaga District School	H
159.	1413	Waciwaci District School	H
160.	1414	Vatoa District School	H
161 .	1415	Ratu Mocevakaca Memorial School	H
162.	1416	Kabara District School	H
163.	1417	Namuka District School	H
164.	1418	Moce District School	H
165.	1419	Cicia District School	H
166.	1420	Yasana-i-Ra District School	H
167.	1421	Totoya District School	H
168.	1422	Komo Villaae School	H
169.	1423	Vanuavatu District School	H
170.	1424	Mabula District School	H
171.	1425	Matuatabu Primarv School	H
172 .	1426	Delaiverata District School	H
173 .	1427	Qalikarua District School	H
174.	1428	Doi Villaoe School	H
175 .	1429	Mualevu Villaoe School	H
176.	1431	Butoni Villaoe School	H
177 .	1433	Naitauba Primary School	H
178 .	1434	Tuvuca Village School	H
179 .	1435	Susui Villaoe School	H
180.	1436	Vunioioia Villaoe School	H
181.	1439	Vunuku Villaoe School	H

182.	1442	Cikobia Villaoe School	H
183 .	1443	Natokalau Primarv School	H
184 .	1447	Navesi Primarv School	H
185.	1448	Avea Primarv School	H
186.	1449	Tabutoaa Villaae School	H
187.	1451	Cakova Villaoe School	H
188.	1452	Babasea Primarv School	H
189.	1453	Naikeleyaaa Villaoe School	H
190.	1454	Ketei Primarv School	H
191.	1455	Davetalevu Primary School	H
192.	1503	Waitooa Villaoe School	H
193.	1505	Delana Methodist Primary School	H
194.	1510	Batiki District School	H
195.	1511	Bureta District School	H
196.	1514	Qalivakabau District School	H
197.	1515	Nabasovi District School	H
198.	1516	Nairai District School	H
199.	1517	Narocake District School	H
200.	1518	Moturiki District School	H
201.	1519	Sawaieke District School	H
202.	1520	Taviya District School	H
203.	1521	Vanuaso District School	H
204.	1522	Visoto District School	H
205.	1523	Vunivasa District School	H
206.	1524	Navukailaoi District School	H
207.	1525	Lamiti Malawai School	H
208.	1526	Makoqai District School	H
209.	1527	Saint James Primary School	H
210 .	1528	Tuatua Nasau Primary School	H
211 .	1529	Ratu Seru Memorial School	H
212.	1531	Nawaikama District School	H
213.	1532	Nacamaki District School	H
214.	1533	Lovoni Primary School	H
215.	1534	Nukuloa Village School	H
216.	1535	Nakodu Mudu Primary School	H
217 .	1537	Davetarua Primary School	H
218.	1538	Kade Village School	H
219 .	1541	Nacavanadi VillaQe School	H
220.	1542	Rukuruku Primary School	H
221.	1543	Wakava Island Primary School	H
222.	1544	Viro Primary School	H
223 .	1545	Loreto Primary School	H
224.	1546	Uluibau Primary School	H
225.	1547	Vione Primary School	H
226 .	1603	Qumusea District School	H
227.	1604	Uluibau District School	H
228.	1606	Cadranasiga District School	H
229.	1607	Vunivutu Primary School	H
230.	1609	Naduri District School	H

231.	1610	Namuka District School	H
232.	1611	Naseakula District School	H
233.	1612	Seaqqa District School	H
234.	1613	Udu District School	H
235.	1614	Mali District School	H
236.	1615	Cikobia District School	H
237.	1616	Kia District School	H
238.	1617	Doqotuki District School	H
239.	1618	Nasasa District School	H
240.	1621	Naduna Arya Pathshala	H
241.	1622	Naleba Primary School	H
242 .	1623	Wainikoro Public School	H
243 .	1630	Lagalaga Sanatan Primary School	H
244.	1632	Bulavou District School	H
245 .	1633	Daku Primary School	H
246 .	1634	Duavata District School	H
247 .	1635	Waiaele Primary School	H
248.	1637	Dreketi Primary School	H
249.	1639	Druadrua District School	H
250	1640	Bocalevu muslim Primary School	H
251 .	1642	Vunicuicui Sanatan Dharm Primary School	H
252.	1643	Nubu Primary School	H
253 .	1644	Boubale Primary School	H
254.	1645	Muanidevo Sanatan Dharam Primary School	H
255.	1646	Wavuwavu Primary School	H
256.	1647	Naaiai Primary School	H
257 .	1648	Valelawa Primary School	H
258 .	1649	Korotari Arya Primary School	H
259 .	1650	Lutukina District School	H
260.	1654	Tabucola Valibar Sangam Primary School	H
261.	1655	Navoalevu Primary School	H
262.	1659	Coqeloa Sangam Primary School	H
263.	1660	Vunimanuca Primary School	H
264 .	1661	Korotolutolu Primary School	H
265 .	1669	Solove Primary School	H
266 .	1670	Waidamudamu S D Primary	H
267.	1671	Vudibasoga Catholic School	H
268.	1672	Draladamu Primary School	H
269.	1675	Korowiri/Tovata Primary	H
270.	1676	Navai Primary School	H
271 .	1677	BatirilaQi District School	H
272.	1679	Naikelikoso Primary School	H
273.	1681	Vatubalavu Infant School	H
274 .	1682	Nakaidrau Infant School	H
275 .	1685	Kabu Kei Nailoca Infant School	H
276.	1700	Seaqqa Muslim School	H
277.	1702	Loma Primary School	H
278 .	1703	Namata Primary School	H
279 .	1704	Raunitogo Primary School	H

280.	1705	Saint Teresa of Lisieux Primary School	H
281.	1706	Conua District School	H
282 .	1712	Mavua District School	H
283.	1714	Nasikawa District School	H
284.	1715	Noikoro District School	H
285.	1716	Nokonoko District School	H
286.	1719	Tau Primary School	H
287.	1720	Ratu Ilaisa Memorial School	H
288.	1721	Vatulele District School	H
289.	1722	Wai District School	H
290.	1723	Waicoba District School	H
291.	1724	Maiolo District School	H
292.	1726	Navatusila District School	H
293	1727	Nadrau Primarv School	H
294.	1728	Malomalo Primarv School	H
295	1729	Batiri Public School	H
296.	1730	Nelson Palmer S D A School	H
297.	1731	Nabitu Primarv School	H
298.	1732	Nawai Public School	H
299.	1733	Sigatoka School for Soecial Education	H
300.	1740	Bemana District School	H
301.	1741	Kavanaosau Sanatan Dhann	H
302.	1742	Lomawai Primarv School	H
303.	1746	Savusavu Public School	H
304.	1750	Nalaai Public School	H
305.	1751	Nabila Public School	H
306.	1753	Ratu Nemani Memorial School	H
307.	1754	Nadralla Sanaam School	H
308.	1757	Nabaka Primarv School	H
309.	1758	Namamanuca Primary School	H
310.	1760	Nadroumai Primarv School	H
311.	1761	Koroinasau Primary School	H
312.	1762	Ratu Nalewavada Public School	H
313.	1764	Yalavou Public School	H
314.	1765	Natutale Primarv School	H
315.	1801	Dravuni District School	H
316.	1802	Lutu District School	H
317.	1804	Muaira District School	H
318.	1805	Nabaitavo District School	H
319.	1806	Nabukaluka District School	H
320.	1807	Navuakece District School	H
321.	1808	Naivucini District School	H
322.	1809	Nairukuruku District School	H
323.	1810	Navuso District School	H
324.	1811	Nakorosule District School	H
325.	1813	Nakurukuruvakatini Primary School	H
326.	1814	Natoaika Villaoe School	H
327.	1817	Soloira District School	H
328.	1818	Vanuakula Catholic School	H

329.	1819	Viria District School	H
330.	1820	Vunidawa District School	H
331.	1821	Wainawaaa District School	H
332.	1822	Kasavu Primarv School	H
333.	1823	Naqali District School**	H
334.	1829	Nakini Village School	H
335.	1830	Naitavuni District School	H
336.	1843	Muaniweni Primary School	H
337.	1845	Naitasiri Primary School	H
338.	1846	Viria Public School	H
339.	1848	Vunidawa Sanatan Primary School**	H
340.	1850	Shantiniketan Pathshala School	H
341.	1851	Nasele Catholic School	H
342.	1854	Ratu Alipate Primary School	H
343.	1856	Rara District School.	H
344.	1857	Nadakuni District School	H
345.	1859	Waidra Muslim Primary	H
346.	1860	Nawaisomo Primary School	H
347.	1867	Nacokaika Village School	H
348.	1872	Navurevure Primary School	H
349.	1875	Turagarua Primary School	H
350.	1876	Mau Primary School	H
351.	1877	Naboro Sawanikula Primary School	H
352.	1878	COLOI-NAIVAKACERE PRIMARY	H
353.	1881	Nailagobokala Primary School	H
354.	1882	Nakavika Primary School	H
355.	1883	Davuilevu Methodist Primary••	H
356.	1889	NAKOROBOYA PRIMARY SCHOOL	H
357.	1893	NAMUKA-1-CAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL	H
358.	1895	NAIVAKA PRIMARY SCHOOL	H
359.	1899	Uluinakorovatu Primary School	H
360.	1902	Namosi Catholic Primary	H
361 .	1903	Veivatuloa Village School	H
362.	1904	Navunikabi Catholic School	H
363.	1905	Veinuqa District School	H
364.	1906	Nakavu Village School	H
365.	1907	Ro Matanitobua Memorial School	H
366.	1908	Naqarawai S D A Primary School	H
367.	1910	Wainiyavu Primary School	H
368.	2002	Tokaimalo District School	H
369.	2003	Nabau District School	H
370.	2004	Vatukacevaceva Village School	H
371.	2005	Nalawa Central School	H
372.	2007	Nasau District School	H
373.	2008	Navitilevu District School	H
374.	2009	Navolau District School	H
375.	2010	Navunibitu Catholic School	H
376.	2013	Rakiraki District School	H
377.	2014	Navatu Primary School	H

378	2015	Nalaba District School	H
379.	2016	Saivou District School	H
380	2017	Malake Villae School	H
381	2018	Nakorotubu District School	H
382.	2019	Mataso Primarv School	H
383.	2020	Bureivanua District School	H
384.	2021	Namuaniwaoa Villae School	H
385.	2023	Naroko Primarv School	H
386.	2024	Bavlv Memorial School	H
387.	2025	Nawaaavesi Primary School	H
388.	2030	Barotu Primary School	H
389.	2033	Ellinaton Primarv School	H
390.	2034	Nanuku Sanaam School	H
391.	2037	Sudha Primarv School	H
392.	2040	Wairuku Primary School	H
393.	2041	Waimari Primarv School	H
394.	2042	Naria Primary School	H
395.	2043	Madhuvani Primary School	H
396.	2046	Bucalevu Primary School	H
397.	2050	Nasevani Primary School	H
398 .	2051	Rakiraki Muslim Primary School	H
399.	2053	Dobuilevu Muslim Primary School	H
400.	2054	Tataiva Memorial School	H
401.	2101	Saint Joseph Primarv School(Naililili)	H
402.	2102	Vutia District School	H
403.	2105	Dreketi District School	H
404.	2108	Rukua Raviravi Primarv School	H
405.	2109	Rewa District School	H
406.	2110	Sawau District School	H
407.	2112	Nukui Villae School	H
408.	2121	Burebasaaa District School	H
409.	2201	Malhaha District School	H
410.	2202	Motusa District School	H
411.	2203	Paptea District School	H
412.	2204	Christ the Kina Primary School	H
413 .	2323	Waioanake District School	H
414.	2394	Wainimakutu Villae School	H
415.	2397	The Early Intervention Centre	H
416.	2401	Deuba District School	H
417.	2404	Nuku St Peter Chanel Primarv School	H
418.	2405	Yanuca Island School	H
419.	2406	Burenitu Village School	H
420.	2503	NaQaQa SDA Primary School	H
421.	2504	Rokotuivatu District School	H
422.	2505	Bau District School	H
423.	2506	Ratu Veikoso Primary School	H
424.	2507	Cautata District School	H
425.	2510	Kaba Primary School	H
426.	2511	Daku Villae School	H



427.	2512	Kuku District School	H
428.	2515	Naileaa District School	H
429.	2517	Namara District School**	H
430.	2518	Namata District School	H
431.	2519	Namena District School	H
432.	2521	Nasamila District School	H
433.	2522	Ratu Asaeli Rokovucago Memorial School	H
434.	2523	Nasautoka District School	H
435.	2524	Saint Vincent de Paul Primary School**	H
436.	2526	Dakuivuna Village School	H
437.	2530	Ratu Filimoni Loco Mem. School	H
438.	2532	Vunibokoi District School	H
439.	2535	Wailotua District School	H
440.	2536	Ucunivanua District School	H
441.	2537	Tai District School	H
442.	2539	Naseva Villaa School	H
443.	2540	Naivacula District School	H
444.	2543	Korociriciri Primary School	H
445.	2546	Naqia SDA Primary School	H
446.	2553	Lodoni Primary School	H
447.	2557	Krishna Janardhan School	H
448.	2558	Gram Sangathan School	H
449.	2559	Navunisea District School	H
450.	2564	Delainakaikai Primary School	H
451.	2566	Nailagotabua Primary School	H
452.	2567	Turagabeci Primary School	H
453.	2570	Naselesele Primarv School	H
454.	2574	Navotua Infant Primary School	H
455.	2575	Ratu Nalukuva Primary School	H
456.	2578	Ratu Peni Neumi Infant Primary School	H
457.	2582	Sacred Heart Infant School	H
458.	2584	Nasivikoso Village School	H
459.	2587	KAVULA BANIKEA INFANT SCHOOL	H
460.	2588	WAINUNU INFANT SCHOOL	H
461.	2591	Maharishi Primary School	H
462.	2593	NASAUVERE PRIMARY SCHOOL	H
463.	2602	LAVENA PRIMARY SCHOOL	H
464.	3001	Qalitu Primary School	H
465.	3003	Talaiya Muslim P. School	H
466.	3006	Naruku Primary School	H
467.	3007	Lomolomo Public School	H
468.	3010	Davota Primary School	H
469.	3014	Sarava Sanatan Dharm School	H
470.	3015	Vatuyaka Sanqam School	H
471.	3017	Bulabula Sanatan Dharam School	H
472.	3018	Rarawai Muslim School	H
473.	3020	Wairabetia Muslim	H
474.	3024	Qerelevu Hindu School	H
475.	3025	Teidamu Primary School	H

476.	3026	Drasa Muslim Primary School	H
477.	3027	Naidirl Bay Khalsa School	H
478.	3029	Tavua Andhra Sangam School	H
479.	3034	Lololo Primary School	H
480.	3036	Masimasi Primary School	H
481.	3037	Nalovo Sangam School	H
482.	3038	Ratu Apenisa Memorial School	H
483.	3040	Viwa District School	H
484.	3044	Ba Andhra Sangam School	H
485.	3045	Namau Public School	H
486.	3057	Nadele Public School	H
487.	3058	Hindu Maha Sabha**	H
488.	3065	Namara Village School	H
489.	3068	Vatukoula Arva Samai School	H
490.	3070	Gaunavou Primary School	H
491.	3071	BouwaQa Primary School	H
492.	3082	Mana S D A School	H
493.	3083	Satva Sai Primary Sch	H
494.	9061	Ra Society School for Disabled	H
495.	9138	Norah Frazer School for Special Education	H
496.	9300	Nukubolu Primary School	H
497.	9401	Buruwa Youth Memorial School	H
498.	9748	Nasavusavu Special School	H
499.	9749	Vakacereivalu Memorial School	H
500.	9832	Nausori Special Education School	H



## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, HERITAGE & ARTS

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### **CIRCULAR**

**From:** Acting Permanent Secretary for Education, Heritage and Arts

**To:** All School Heads, School Management, Divisional and District Offices

**Ref:** HRM-DOO3

**Date:** 20 March 2020

**SUBJECT: CONFIRMATION AND 'FREEZING' OF CURRENT SECONDARY SCHOOL CLASSIFICATIONS**

- 1) In December 2017, School Heads, School Management, Divisional and District Offices were informed via Circular (C103-17), that secondary schools were to be classified as Small, Medium or Large based on the number of teaching staff in the school.
- 2) SMALL secondary schools were classified as those schools that had 25 teachers or less with a Principal and VP included and an AP only if the school had more than 180 students; MEDIUM secondary schools were classified as those schools with 26-50 teachers with Principal, VP and AP included ; and LARGE secondary schools were classified as those schools that had over 51 teachers with a Principal, VP and AP included.
- 3) Since 2017, Executive-approved changes to some schools' classifications have occurred . In addition , many schools have been allocated additional teachers. As a result, under the current ' teacher-only' criteria, there has become a lack of equity and/or consistency for many secondary schools within the secondary classifications system.
- 4) MEHA has reviewed all secondary school classifications and has identified reviewed, interim criteria that should articulate why schools in the main, are the classifications that they are. The revised interim criteria are:

ClassN	Prine. Band	V P	AP	Criteria
SMALL	J	1	I (180Sts)	Has up to 470 students <b>OR</b> 25 or less teachers
MEDIUM	K	1	I	Has a student range from 471-919 <b>AND</b> 26-50 teachers
LARGE	L	1	I	Has greater r than 920 students <b>OR</b> 51 teachers or more

- 5) For a list of secon dary schools and their classification s, please refer to Appendi x I , Lists A. B and C.
- 6) Schools that have asterisks\*\* should note that they fall outside of the interim criteria. MEHA will consult these schools for clarification regarding staff and student numbers over Terms I and 2 of 2020. In the short term however, and at least until the commencement of the new financial year on 1st August, no school classifications will change.
- 7) With these lists now issued, and until further notice, all classifications will remain 'frozen'.

whilst MEHA further investigates the secondary school classification process throughout the 2020 school year.

- 8) Additionally, and during 2020, MEHA through the Secondary Directorate, will complete a full review of the school classifications process for secondary schools and will develop the process for applying for reclassification.

Enquiries relating to this Circular should be addressed to the Secondary Director at [josefo.masi@ucra.gO\nct.gO\..fj](mailto:josefo.masi@ucra.gO\nct.gO\..fj) or on 322 0607.



**Susan Kiran (Ms.)**  
**Acting Permanent Secretary**

## APPENDIX 1- LIST A · LARGE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

#	CODE	SCHOOL NAME	Principal Band
1.	1057	Natabua High School	L
2.	1825	Adi Cakobau School**	L
3.	1826	Lelean Memorial School	L
4.	1827	Rishikul Sanatan College	L
5.	2350	Suva Grammar School	L
6.	2352	Dudley High School	L
7.	2362	Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Memorial School	L
8.	2392	Nasinu Secondary School**	L
9.	2563	Ivunimono High School	L
10.	3048	Nadi SKM College	L
11.	3050	Ratu Navula Secondary School**	L
12.	3053	Tilak High School	L
13.	3056	Tavua College**	L

## APPENDIX 1- LIST B - MEDIUM SECONDARY SCHOOLS

#	CODE	SCHOOL NAME	Principal Band
1.	1046	Jasper Williams High School	K
2.	1119	Central College Lautoka	K
3.	1260	Nasavusavu Secondary School	K
4.	1512	Saint John's College	K
5.	1638	Labasa College	K
6.	1653	Labasa Sangam (S K M) College	K
7.	1734	Cuvu College	K
8.	1831	Assemblies of God High School	K
9.	1861	Bhawani Dayal Arya College	K
10.	2044	Penang Sangam High School	K
11.	2309	Marist Brothers High School	K
12.	2319	St Joseph's Secondary School	K
13.	2330	DAV College	K
14.	2336	Gospel High School	K
15.	2337	Mahatma Gandhi Memorial High School	K
16.	2339	Sacred Heart College	K
17.	2349	Jai Narayan College	K
18.	2393	Suva Muslim College	K
19.	2413	Vashist Muni College	K
20.	2538	Queen Victoria School	K
21.	2541	Ratu Kadavulevu School	K
22.	2560	Sita Central High School	K
23.	3004	Swami Vivekananda College	K
24.	3005	Xavier College	K
25.	3011	Lautoka Muslim College	K
26.	3052	Pandit Vishnu Dea Memorial College	K
27.	3062	Kami! Muslim College	K
28.	3500	Seaqqa Central College	K

29.	9027	A D Patel College	K
30.	9266	Shiri Guru Nanak Khalsa Secondary School	K
31.	9329	Nadi Muslim College	K
32.	9361	Ba Provincial Free Bird Institute	K
33.	9377	Drasa Secondary School	K
34.	9380	Korovuto College	K
35.	9382	St Thomas High School	K
36.	9400	Votualevu College	K
37.	9420	Nasinu Muslim College	K
38.	9422	Tailevu North College	K
39.	9557	Nabua Secondary School	K
40.	9625	Sigatoka Methodist College	K
41.	9782	Dilkusha Methodist High School	K
42.	9787	John Wesley College	K

### APPENDIX 1- LIST C - SMALL SECONDARY SCHOOLS

#	CODE	SCHOOL NAME	Principal Band
1.	1134	Bua Central College	J
2.	1139	Ratu Luke Secondary School	J
3.	1215	Bucalevu Secondary School	J
4.	1246	Niusawa Methodist High School	J
5.	1272	Duavata Secondary School	J
6.	1274	Holy Cross College	J
7.	1282	Basden College	J
8.	1310	Vunisea Secondary School	J
9.	1444	Yasayasa Moala College	J
10.	1445	Ratu Finau Secondary School	J
11.	1446	Adi Maopa Secondary School	J
12.	1504	Levuka Public School	J
13.	1539	Gau Secondary School	J
14.	1540	Karo Island High School	J
15.	1664	Labasa Muslim College	J
16.	1665	Bulileka Sanatan College	J
17.	1666	Dreketi Central College	J
18.	1668	All Saints Secondary School	J
19.	1673	Tabia Sanatan College	J
20.	1674	Batinikama College	J
21.	1680	Mace Secondary	J
22.	1683	Jeremiah Raibevu College	J
23.	1686	Nasau Central Secondary School	J
24.	1687	Bau Central College	J
25.	1767	Nadroga Arya College	J
26.	1858	Saraswati College	J
27.	1871	Adventist High School	J
28.	1873	Ahmadiyya Muslim College	J
29.	1884	Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School (Voloca)	J
30.	1886	Cicia High School	J
31.	1887	Dawasamu Secondary	J

32.	1890	Kalabu Secondary	J
33.	1894	Wainimakutu Secondary School	J
34.	1896	Noco Secondary	J
35.	1898	Vatukaloko Secondary School	J
36.	1997	Thomas Baker Memorial School	J
37.	2049	Rakiraki Public High School	J
38.	2206	Rotuma High School	J
39.	2327	Ballantine Memorial High School	J
40.	2329	D A V Girls College	J
41.	2338	Suva Sangam College	J
42.	2562	Pt. Shreedhar Maharaj College	J
43.	2572	Uluivalili College	J
44.	2573	South Taveuni Secondary School	J
45.	2580	St. Francis College	J
46.	2581	Ratu Lalabalavu Secondary School	J
47.	2585	Christian Mission Fellowship Secondary School	J
48.	2586	Yasawa North Secondary School	J
49.	2589	Davuilevu Methodist High School	J
50.	2590	Nasesevia Secondary School	J
51.	2592	MAGODRO SECONDARY SCHOOL	J
52.	2600	Nuku Secondary School	J
53.	2601	Beqa/Yanuca Secondary School	J
54.	3023	Ba Methodist High School	J
55.	3033	Khalsa College	J
56.	3041	Nilsen College	J
57.	3051	Sabeto College	J
58.	3054	DAV College, Ba	J
59.	3055	Ba Sangam College	J
60.	3064	Ba Sanatan College	J
61.	3081	Tavua District Secondary School	J
62.	9020	Ra High School	J
63.	9025	Nakauvadra High School	J
64.	9026	Nukuloa College	J
65.	9028	Nadarivatu High School	J
66.	9029	Salata High School	J
67.	9107	Richmond Methodist High School	J
68.	9113	Kadavu Provincial Secondary School	J
69.	9115	Delana Methodist High School	J
70.	9218	Vatuvonu Secondary School	J
71.	9223	Naleba College	J
72.	9229	Napuka Secondary School	J
73.	9230	Saqani High School	J
74.	9249	Nabala Secondary School	J
75.	9251	Nadogo Central College	J
76.	9252	Immaculate Conception College	J
77.	9253	Holy Family Secondary School	J
78.	9255	Waiqele College	J
79.	9256	Rabi High School	J
80.	9257	Lekutu Secondary School	J

81.	9258	Vaturova Koroalau Secondary	J
82.	9261	Saint Bedes College	J
83.	9264	Vunimoli Islamia College	J
84.	9267	Naikavaki College	J
85.	9299	Valebasoga Secondary School	J
86.	9333	Sigatoka Andhra Sangam School	J



## ANNEXURE II

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**Reply to Written Question No. 100/2023 tabled on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 by the Minister for Youth and Sports, honourable Jese Saukuru (Ref. Page: 1637)**

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THE MINISTER YOUTH AND SPORTS  
(HONOURABLE JESE SAUKURU)

The response to the Question by honourable A.N. Tuicolo is as follows:

- (a) The Fiji National Sports Commission has registered 68 Community Sports Associations, 118 Clubs and 36 Union Associations.
- (b) Currently all Community Sports Associations, Sports Clubs and Union Associations are Active. They continue to run their own programmes in their divisions, allowing the continuance of active physical participation for all.
  - (b) The Central Rural Division has 14 Community Sports Associations, 6 Sports Clubs and 3 Sports Union Associations;
  - (c) Central Urban: SUVA (Lami to Nausori) has 2 Community Sports Associations, 57 Sports clubs and 2 Sports Union Associations.
  - (d) Eastern Division - Outer islands including the Tailevu Provisional Boundaries, 23 Community Sports Associations, 7 Sports Clubs and 17 Union Associations.
  - (e) Western Division has 18 Community Sports Associations, 29 Sports Clubs and 11 Sports Union Associations.
  - (f) The Northern Division has 11 Community Sports Associations, 19 Sports Clubs and 3 Union Associations.

Each Community association, sports club or union association is expected to ensure they have undertaken the requirements for registration criteria to be eligible for their sustainability in their community. A toolkit requirement criterion is packaged towards having good governance procedures and processes to ensure they are well equipped to conduct their own village and Tikina sports competitions and in the Urban and Pre-Urban areas the same through their Sports networks.

In addition to this requirement, the Community sports associations, and sports clubs, themselves get affiliated to National Sporting Organisations allow greater grassroots development and create talent pathways for individuals (All Fijians) to aspire too.

- (c) All communities can request the sports they would like for their community. Traditionally and in a typical situation, requests are for RUGBY, RUGBY LEAGUE, NETBALL and VOLLEYBALL, however many of the villages and communities, both rural and urban have begun to request for other sports such as Badminton, Boxing, Weightlifting, Futsal, Swimming, Outrigger canoeing, Australian Football (Aussie Rules), Judo, Fitness Leaders for lumber and aerobics, Cricket, and squash and this is an ongoing request for many This also does not limit them to learning a new sport, it also allows them to be taught to be community coaches, Trainers, Technical officials, and players of the sports of their choice

and excel to national level accreditation through their international sporting federation.

All Sports promote equality and equity, inclusivity regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religious backgrounds, and physical abilities.

- (d) The Fiji National Sports Commission has five Divisions, and yes, it does have Community Sports outreach programmes in all five. The Five Divisions are Western Division, Northern Division, Eastern Division, Central Rural Division and Central Urban Division.