



# PARLIAMENT NEWSLETTER

2023 Parliament Quarterly Newsletter  
Issue No. 3 : July – September

## October

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

## November

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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

## December

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**KEYS** ● PUBLIC HOLIDAYS ● PARLIAMENT SITTING  
● PROROGATION

## FIJI COMMITS TO PRESERVING OUR OCEANS AND COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Fiji, like many other Small Island Developing States (SIDS), faces disproportionate vulnerabilities stemming from its geography and dependence on the ocean for its sustenance and livelihoods.

But rather than succumb to the challenges, Fiji has chosen to lead with resilience, innovation, and an unyielding commitment to preserving our oceans and combating climate change.

These were the comments by the Speaker of the Fijian Parliament, Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu during the 3rd Pacific Islands Parliaments Group (PIPG) that was held in the Kingdom of Tonga in August, 2023.

He highlighted that Fiji's National Ocean Policy is a prime example of the nation's dedication to sustainable ocean management.

"Fiji is designating 30% of its marine space as protected areas, working towards sustainable management of 100% of its Exclusive Economic Zone, and fostering community engagement."

"Through this effort, Fiji hopes to not only safeguard its marine biodiversity but also nurture a model that can be followed by others seeking to harmonise ocean health and climate resilience."

The Hon. Speaker pointed out that after developing the policy and its supporting legal mechanism, Fiji has now begun to implement certain elements of this critical document.

"Together with development partners, academia and non-government organisations, Fiji is taking a holistic approach towards realising its ocean conservation targets."

"We have begun work on fisheries characterisation, the development of a blue economy prospectus and marine spatial planning in a bid to ensure that our leaders are guided by the best possible and available science being researched and developed by local experts thus also ensuring that local knowledge and



Speaker Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, the Secretary-General to Parliament Mrs Jeanette Emberson and Liaison Officer Ms Salome at Kanokupolu village which was destroyed by tsunami in 2022.

information is retained in the country."

"The work that Fiji is undertaking in the ocean-climate change nexus is not just a local endeavour; it is a universal lesson in the determination, cooperation, and the understanding that our fates are intricately woven together. As we stand at a crossroads in our history, with the window to address climate change rapidly narrowing, we must draw inspiration from Fiji's example," Hon. Speaker added.

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Inia Seruiratu during an intervention, urged Members of Parliament to be consistent in their messaging in all international meetings.

"I know our leaders are going to COP28, Inter-Parliamentary Union and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meetings, we need to take strong messages to these forums, particularly given our vulnerability and how climate change affects us."

The Chair of the Conference, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Lord Fakafanua agreed with Hon. Seruiratu on the importance of making the Pacific voices heard at international forums.

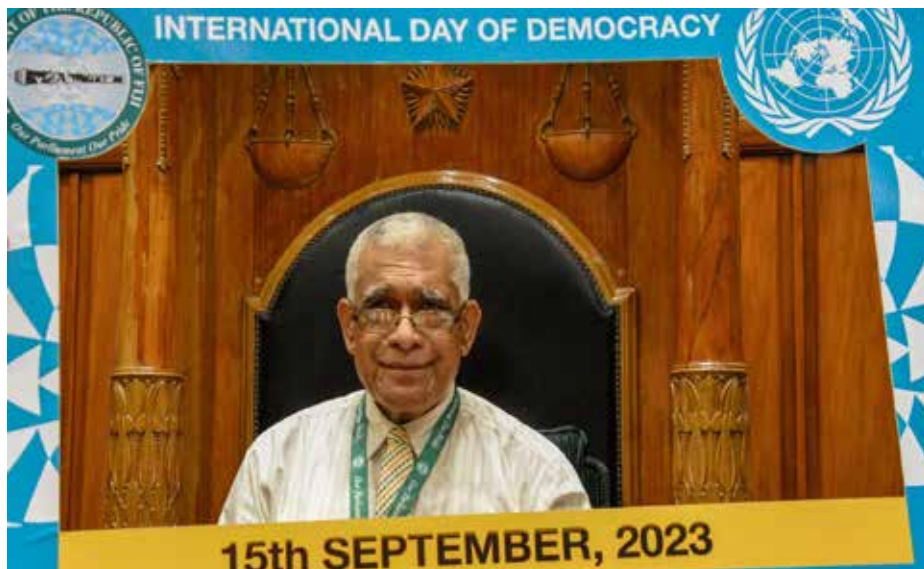
Australia and Tuvalu were the two new members of PIPG. Other countries that were represented included Rapa Nui, Cook Islands, Niue, New Caledonia, Palau, French Polynesia, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna and Fiji.

The next PIPG conference will be held in Palau in 2024.

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# PARLIAMENT COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY



Speaker, Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu

“Parliamentary democracy represents the ideal channel for the collective expression of Fijians. It provides every citizen with a platform to voice their hopes, concerns, and aspirations.”

These were the comments by the Speaker of the Fijian Parliament, Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu in his International Day of Democracy message that was published in the newspapers on Friday, September 15, 2023.

“As we mark this occasion, we are presented with a chance to explore the essence of democracy and assess its contemporary manifestations. It also stands as an opportune moment to propel forward the democratic spirit, fostering freedom, inclusivity, peace and the unwavering respect for human rights; hence, it is a good time to reflect on our



Leader of the Opposition Hon. Inia Seruiratu and Opposition MP Hon. Vijay Nath.

Parliamentary representative democracy and to re-evaluate the many ways that we all participate in decision-making processes.”

“The Fijian Parliamentary democracy stands as a beacon of hope, embodying values of citizen participation, equality, human rights, political tolerance,



Assistant Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna, Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management Hon. Sakiyasi Ditoka with a visitor in Parliament.

accountability, transparency, free and fair elections every four years, the rule of law, separation of powers and equitable representation. In the contemporary context, these principles have expanded to include the imperatives of inclusivity, gender equality and the full embrace of persons with disabilities. Therefore, Parliament is dynamically responsive to the needs and demands of Fijians and enacts and amends laws as and when required.”

The Hon. Speaker highlighted some historical events that took place during the week, as it coincided with the Parliament sitting week.

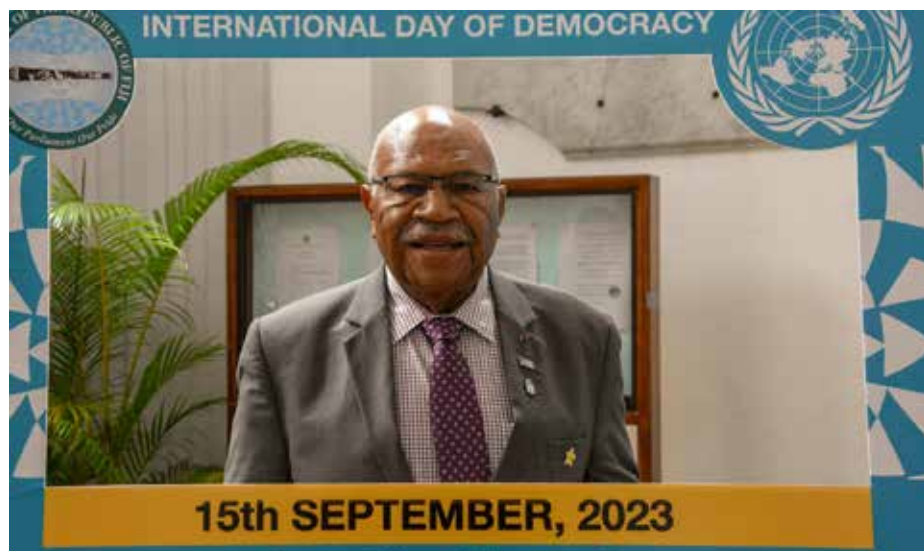
“For the first time since 6 October 2014, the Parliament doors were opened and would remain open during all Parliament sittings.”

“It was a historic week also for the Fijian Parliament as we had two issues that were put forward by the Opposition; an urgent oral question and withdrawal of a Government Bill, which were accepted by the Government – something that had not been accommodated previously.”

“Bi-partisanship is now being displayed and I trust that this process will continue for the betterment of the Fijian people – who are the collective voice of our nation.” Hon. Ratu Naiqama also emphasised the important role the media plays in providing information to the public.

“Parliament recognises that the media is the public’s watchdog, providing information to the public about how the three arms of the State, which are the Parliament, Executive and Judiciary, are undertaking their responsibilities to the people.”

“Parliament needs the media to inform the public on how it is conducting its functions. It also needs the media to facilitate public participation in Parliament’s functions. The Media Industry Development Act 2010 was repealed by Parliament on 6 April 2023 and this has given greater freedom to the media for its oversight role, which has been welcomed by the media industry and citizens.”



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



# FIJI PARLIAMENT DELEGATION ATTENDS APPFGH MEETING IN MONGOLIA



Minister for Health Hon. Dr Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu, Acting Regional Director for the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab and Member of the Opposition Hon. Penioni Ravunawa at the 7th APPFGH Forum.

**F**iji is committed to the transformation and regulation of existing health systems, aiming for universal access and social health protection.

This was highlighted by the Minister for Health and Medical Services, Hon. Dr Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu during the 7th Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum on Global Health (APPFGH) that was held in August in Mongolia.

The meeting was hosted by the State Great Hural of Mongolia, with support from the Ministry of Health of Mongolia and the World Health Organization (WHO). Hon. Dr Ratu Lalabalavu discussed the coverage of essential health services in Fiji, the Ministry's strategic planning, the objectives of PHC reform in Fiji, its innovative elements, key initiatives under the reform, current national activities, and the outlook for the future.

"The review of Fiji's coverage of essential health services demonstrates the struggles that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Fiji face in the last decade and worsened by the COVID pandemic in the last 3 years."

"The full reliance on overseas supplies of health commodities, impact of the economic, environmental, and social determinants of health, and the increasingly

high connectivity for movement between our countries provides ongoing and new challenges for health services and health economies in the region," the Minister said.

Opposition Member of Parliament Hon. Penioni Ravunawa also gave a presentation on the topic of 'Primary Health Care in the Region: where we are and entry points for reform'.

"Fiji has outreach programmes, such as the well-coordinated inter-island clinical specialty outreach visits via MV Veivueti, which are embedded into the health services programmes with the aim to increase access to care in rural and remote areas, and support healthcare workers providing services in rural settings."

"The health outcome indicators signal the need to improve comprehensive health service access, quality and equity of care considering Fiji's changing health needs on account of the NCD crisis, rising HIV incidence and climate change."

"The entry points for reform and rejuvenation of primary health care can be achieved through addressing health financing and investment in PHC, addressing healthcare service capacity and management, and targeting immediate and urgent health needs with

innovative approaches," Hon. Ravunawa said.

More than 70 participants, including representatives of the WHO, parliamentarians, and Health Ministers of 15 countries attended the meeting, with the theme "Building Primary Health Care for the Future".

The APPGF is a platform for parliamentarians to exchange ideas, build political will, enhance capacities, and foster collaboration in driving sustainable action for health.

Parliamentarians, through their core functions of law-making, budgeting, government oversight, and representation of constituencies, can play an important role in shaping health priorities and driving actions at global, regional, national, and local levels. These functions also offer opportunities to foster multisectoral action and engage in international partnerships.

At the end of the forum, the delegation had an opportunity to meet and hear the concerns and feedback of the Fijian community in Mongolia, most of whom work as teachers in schools and universities.

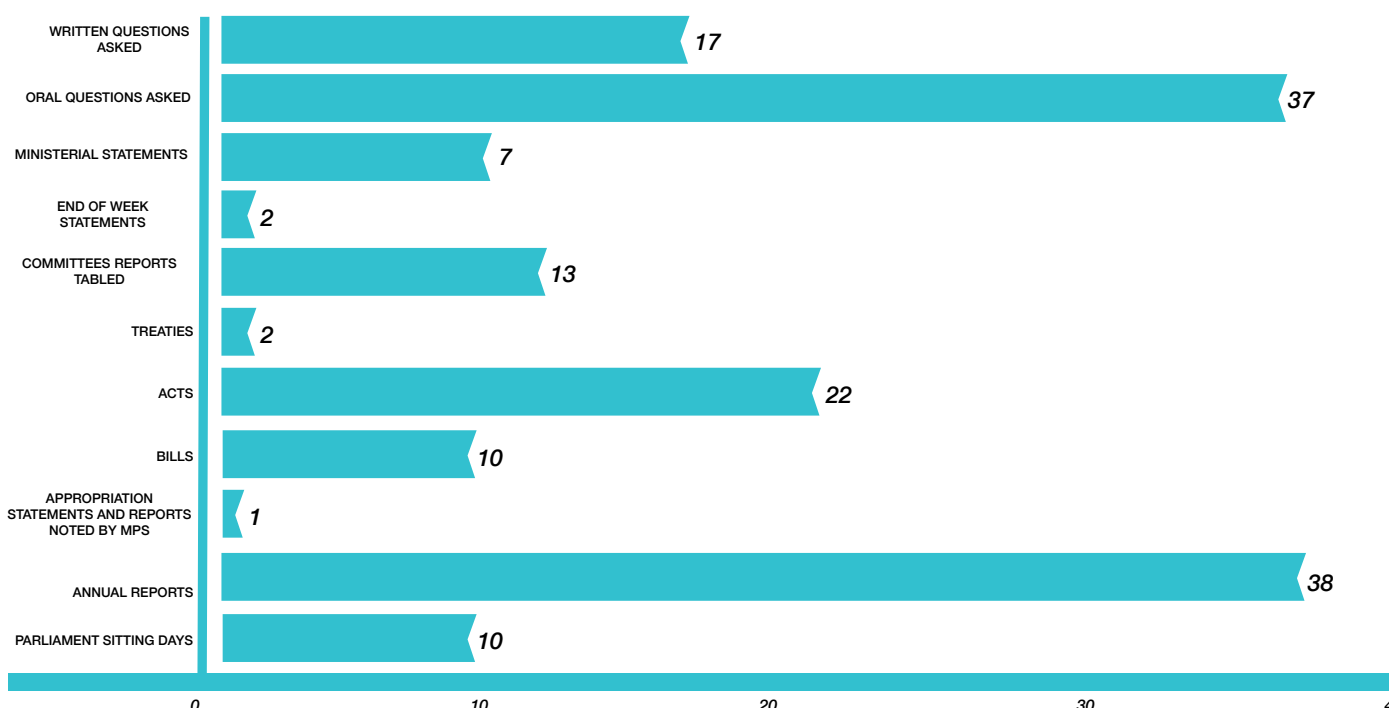
# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS AND PROTOCOL : JULY – SEPTEMBER

No	CONFERENCE	VENUE	DATE	DELEGATION
01	Tuākana, Tēina, Whenua, Talanoa - Continuing the conversation: sharing experiences and strengthening one another - Stronger Pacific Parliaments programme hosted by the Tai a Kiwa	Parliament of New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand	6 – 9 August	1. Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua 2. Hon. Sashi Kiran
02	Pacific Islands Parliamentary Group Conference	Nuku'alofa, Tonga	22 – 24 August	1. Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu 2. Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna 3. Hon. Inia Seruiratu 4. Mrs Jeanette Emberson 5. Mr Sakiusa Rakai 6. Mrs Bale Dolokoto
03	Whips Professional Development Programme	Parliament of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia	19 – 24 August	1. Hon. Lynda Tabuya 2. Hon. Alitia Bainivalu 3. Hon. Pio Tikoduadua 4. Hon. Aseri Radrodro 5. Hon. Alvick Maharaj 6. Mrs Saleshni Prasad 7. Mr Seniteli Wainiu
04	Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum on Global Health	Ulaanbatar, Mongolia	21– 23 August	1. Hon. Dr Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu 2. Hon. Penioni Ravunawa 3. Mr Abele Sakulu 4. Mr Sefanaia Tudonu
05	Webinar on SDGs and Sustainable Development 2030	Fiji – Virtual	30 August	1. Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua 2. Hon. Esrom Immanuel

## STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS : JULY – SEPTEMBER

No	STANDING COMMITTEES	Meetings		Site Visit	Reports Referred to Committee	Committee Reports Tabled
		Face-to-Face	Hybrid			
01	STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS	15			7 Reports	3 Reports
02	STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE	6			3 Reports	3 Reports
03	STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS	18			4 Reports	1 Consolidated (4 Annual Reports)
04	STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES	15	1	11	5 Reports	1 Report
05	STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS	17		1	6 Reports	
06	STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AFFAIRS	34	7		13 Reports	5 Reports

## PARLIAMENT SITTING STATS : JULY – SEPTEMBER





# SPEAKER'S EVENTS



An Australian Parliament delegation visited the Fijian Parliament and met with the Speaker, Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu and the senior executives.



Opening of the Induction Workshop for MPs by the Speaker, Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu.



Speaker Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu with the Australian Parliament delegation.



Fiji's Honorary Consul in Hong Kong, Dr. Desmond Lee and the Members of the Hong Kong-Fiji Chamber of Commerce hosted the Fiji delegation to the 66th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference to Accra, Ghana while on transit in Hong Kong



Fiji Parliament delegation at the 3rd Pacific Islands Parliaments Group Conference in Tonga.



Speaker of the Fijian Parliament, Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu received a courtesy call from the Chair of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, Hon. David McAllister, MEP in Parliament



Speakers and Members of Parliament at the 3rd Pacific Islands Parliaments Group Conference in Tonga.



# STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS



Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs from the Public Rental Board General Manager Mr Timoci Naleba and his team on their 2020 Annual Report.



Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights with the members of the Electoral Commission after the submission on their 2020-2021 Annual Report.



Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence during the joint submission from the Ministry of Defence, National Security and Policing on their 2018-2019 Annual Report.



Deputy Chairperson for the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu presenting the Committee's report in Parliament.



Submission to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs from the Fiji Financial Intelligence Unit on their 2021-2022 Annual Report.



First Emoluments Committee Meeting where Hon. Lynda Tabuya was appointed as the Chairperson.



Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts with the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institution representatives.



# OTHER EVENTS



All smiles after Parliament passed the 2023-2024 Appropriation Bill 2023 (Bill No. 3 of 2023) in July 2023.



Fijian Parliament Whips at the Whips Training in the Parliament of Victoria, Melbourne.



All five Women Members of Parliament were present at their first Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Fiji Group meeting that was held in September 2023.



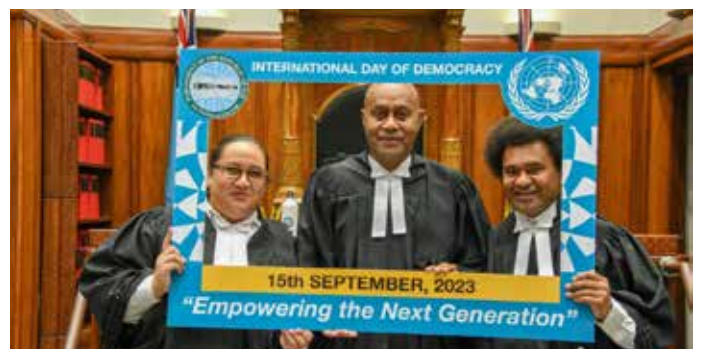
Parliament visit from students and teachers of Yet San Secondary School.



World Health Day celebration at Albert Park



Speaker Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu presents a gift to the Head of Corporate Services, Mr Sefanaia Tudonu during his farewell function.



Secretary-General to Parliament Mrs Jeanette Emberson, Deputy Secretary-General to Parliament Mr Abele Sakulu and Head of Corporate Services Mr Sefanaia Tudonu on International Democracy Day.



# PARLIAMENT BUS OUTREACH IN THE NORTHERN DIVISION

Twenty secondary schools and one special school in the Northern Division were visited by the Parliament Bus team in July and August 2023, as part of the Fijian Parliament's Civic Education and Media programme. The programme aims to educate students and teachers about the roles and functions of Parliament, the works of Parliament, and how to engage with Parliament.

The team began in the Bua Province, covering Immaculate Conception College and Ratu Luke Secondary School and Uluivalili College as its located along the Wailevu West Coast Road.

At Immaculate Conception College, Principal Kenesi Volavola thanked the team for their visit, noting that it has been a lapse of five years as the school was last visited by the Parliament team in 2018 with the late Speaker, Hon. Dr Jiko Luveni.

"The presentation was refreshing and enlightening, and the students were fortunate to gain first-hand information on how Parliament is run and the making of laws in Fiji," Ms Volavola said.

In the Cakaudrove Province, the team visited Navatu Secondary School, Vatuvonu Secondary School, and Napuka Secondary School. Napuka Secondary School Principal Ramesh Naicker thanked the team for bringing Parliament to the remote school.

"Our students do not have the privilege to visit Parliament, and having the team here, our students have been enlightened on the various roles and functions of Parliament and what actually happens in Parliament," Mr Naicker said.



Students of Naikavaki College in Bua after the Parliament Bus programme.

Savusavu Secondary School Assistant Principal Shamal Karan also thanked the team for the programme, encouraging students to share what they had learnt with their peers.

"We thank the Parliament Bus programme for coming to schools in the Northern Division. Many things shared were new to me also," Mr Karan said.

"To you students, if you learn something and keep it to yourself, it is of no use. Whatever you have learnt today, share this information with your friends, classmates, and even your family members in the village."

Year 13 student of Saqani High School, Natoni Sadrugu, thanked the team for bringing Parliament to his school.

"I've been attending Saqani High School for the past five years, and this is the first time for us to listen to this programme," Mr Sadrugu said.

"We only hear about Parliament, but we have never seen or set foot inside Parliament. Our school is in the village, and it is hard for us to visit Parliament, so thank you very much for coming as

we now learn about Parliament and what happens inside Parliament. Whenever we can go to Suva, we will try our best to visit Parliament."

Other secondary schools in Bua and Seaqaqa were also visited during the two-weeks programme, which ended at Nadogo Secondary School and Naleba College along Wainikoro Road.

The programme included a 30-minute presentation on the roles and functions of Parliament, followed by a question-and-answer session and the presentation of prizes, including 32GB USB drives, Parliament pencil cases, caps, key tags, mugs and Parliament bags.

A display of banners of Speakers of Parliament, Prime Ministers, and Leaders of Opposition was also set up, along with other items such as the Senate's mace, sand-timer, a copy of the *Hansard* report, Annual Report and an old wig.

The programme was made possible through the generous support of the Governments of Australia, Japan, and New Zealand under the UNDP Fiji Parliament Support Project.

## SWEARING-IN OF NEW MPs



Swearing-in of Opposition Member of Parliament, Hon. Sachida Nand



Swearing-in of Opposition Member of Parliament, Hon. Taito Rokomatu