



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

MINUTES

of Proceedings of Parliament at Suva on Friday, Fifteenth day of September, 2023

1. The House met at 9.30 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

2. Hon. Speaker took the Chair and read the Prayer.

3. MEMBERS PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present except for the Hon. Parveen Bala, Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua and Hon. Semi Koroilavesau.

4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Leader of the Government in Parliament the Hon. Lynda Tabuya moved that the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 14 September 2023 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

Motion seconded.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Hon. Speaker welcomed all Honourable Members to the sitting, those seated in the gallery and those watching the live proceedings on television and the internet.

Hon. Speaker delivered his message on the International Day of Democracy.

Hon. Speaker informed all Honourable Members that the back-to-office report for the Whips Workshop which was held at the Parliament of Victoria would be made available in the Library.

Hon. Speaker delivered his ruling and instructions on the following –

- (a) evidence submitted by Hon. Parveen Bala;
- (b) Hon. Ketan Lal's communication on breach of privilege; and
- (c) referral on the communication by the Hon. Sashi Kiran on *prima facie* breach of privilege for legal advice.

6. PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

The following reports were tabled and referred accordingly to the relevant Standing Committees –

(a) Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji – 2020 and 2021 Financial Statements of Government and 2020 and 2021 Agency Financial Statements – Ministry of Finance.

(b) Standing Committee on Social Affairs

- (i) Ministry of Health and Medical Services – 2016/2017 Annual Report;
- (ii) Ministry of Health and Medical Services – 2017/2018 Annual Report;
- (iii) Ministry of Health and Medical Services – 2018/2019 Annual Report;
- (iv) Ministry of Health and Medical Services – 2019/2020 Annual Report;
- and
- (v) Ministry of Health and Medical Services – 2020/2021 Annual Report.

(c) Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Ministry of Forestry – 2021/2022 Annual Report.

7. QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

- 135/2023 Hon. Penioni Ravunawa asked the Minister for Health and Medical Services – Can the Minister inform Parliament how the Ministry is addressing the delay in the processing of vacancies for Health officers.
- 136/2023 Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna asked the Minister for Housing and Local Government – Can the Minister update Parliament on the Extension to the Agreement of Cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.
- 137/2023 Hon. Sanjay Kirpal asked the Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources – Can the Minister update Parliament on the reasons for not providing the Sales Data to the Valuer's and Financial Institutes since April 2023 which is essential to Valuer's in determining the Fair Market Values of properties when carrying out valuation.

- 138/2023 Hon. Alitia Bainivalu asked the Minister for Health and Medical Services – Can the Minister update Parliament on the Exchange of Notes on Japan’s Grant Aid to the Ministry Under the Economic and Social Development Programme.
- 139/2023 Hon. Naisa Tuinaceva asked the Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the measures being undertaken by the Ministry and the Land Transport Authority to address the dramatic increase on the number of road accidents and deaths which has set a shocking record of 53 fatalities between January to June 2023 compared to 21 deaths for the same period in 2022.
- 140/2023 Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua to ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics – Can the Deputy Prime Minister inform Parliament on the steps being undertaken by the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission to ensure fair price marking for basic food items and other goods and services as a result of the change of VAT as announced in the 2023 to 2024 National Budget.
- 141/2023 Hon. Alvick Maharaj asked the Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport – Can the Minister inform Parliament how the Ministry intends to stop or regularise those private vehicles involved in illegal PSV activities in order to make their business legal, lawful and safe to the public.
- 142/2023 Hon. Esrom Immanuel to ask the Minister for Education – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the steps being undertaken by the Ministry to address the quality of education in our schools, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Written Questions

- 143/2023 Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua to ask the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs – Can the Prime Minister inform Parliament on the following –
- (a) the number of diplomatic missions Fiji had overseas before 5 December 2006;
 - (b) the number of diplomatic missions established by Fiji overseas from 5 December 2006 to 23 December 2022;
 - (c) the cost of maintaining Fiji’s diplomatic missions overseas each year for the period 2007 to 2022; and
 - (d) the number of diplomatic missions Fiji currently has abroad.

- 144/2023 Hon. Virendra Lal asked the Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration to provide the following –
- (a) how many non-residents have been given work permits since January to July this year; and
 - (b) provide data on work permits granted to expatriates by sectors and country of origin.
- 145/2023 Hon. Naisa Tuinaceva asked the Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the following –
- (a) how many children and women have been homeless in towns and cities for the past 10 years; and
 - (b) how many single mothers' are receiving welfare assistance and what are their age group.

The responses to the Oral Questions and Supplementary Questions were provided by the respective Ministers. The Hon. Speaker allowed Hon. Sashi Kiran to ask questions 140/2023 and 143/2023. The Hon. Speaker informed Honourable Members that Oral Question 142/2023 was withdrawn. The Hon. Minister for Women tabled her response to Written Question 145/2023. The responses to the Written Questions would be submitted by the respective Ministers in accordance with Standing Order 45(3).

8. END OF WEEK STATEMENTS

- (a) Hon. Rinesh Sharma delivered his End of Week Statement and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics the Hon. Prof. Biman Prasad subsequently responded.
- (b) Hon. Jone Usamate delivered his End of Week Statement and the Minister for Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations the Hon. Agni Singh subsequently responded.

9. SUSPENSION MOTION BY THE LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT

The Leader of the Government in Parliament the Hon. Lynda Tabuya moved under Standing Order 6 that so much of Standing Order 23(1) be suspended to allow the House to sit beyond 12.30 p.m. to complete the remaining items listed on the Order Paper.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

10. CONSIDERATION OF BILLS

The Hon. Attorney-General and Minister for Justice the Hon. Siromi Turaga moved a motion pursuant to Standing Order 51 –

- (a) That the Heritage Bill 2023 be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) That the Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) That the Bill must be immediately referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights;
- (d) That the Standing Committee must report on the Bill at the November sitting of Parliament; and
- (e) That upon presentation of the report on the Bill by the Standing Committee, the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament at the November sitting of Parliament, but that 1 hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to him as the Member moving the motion.

Motion seconded.

Motion debated.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The Leader of the Government in Parliament the Hon. Lynda Tabuya moved that Parliament stands adjourned until Tuesday, 14 November 2023 at 9.30 a.m.

Motion seconded.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

Hon. Speaker thanked all Honourable Members for their contributions during the week, and declared Parliament adjourned until Tuesday, 14 November 2023 at 9.30 a.m.

Parliament adjourned at 1.00 p.m.

Speaker of Parliament

Secretary-General to Parliament

15th September, 2023.