

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

FRIDAY, 14TH MARCH, 2025

[CORRECTED COPY]

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FRIDAY, 14TH MARCH, 2025

The Parliament met at 9.40 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present, except honourable V. Pillay.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 13th March, 2025, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPEAKER

Welcome

I welcome all honourable Members to today's final sitting for this week, and all those joining us in the gallery and those watching the live broadcast on television and through the internet.

Honourable Members, we are joined by two groups today – the first group comprises the third-year students and lecturer from the Fiji National University's Department of Ethics and Governance and the second group comprises students from International Christian University. Welcome to Parliament. It is a pleasure to have you all here today. I hope that this experience will ignite your curiosity and deepen your appreciation for the principles that guide our democracy. Once again, welcome, and enjoy today's proceedings.

Establishment of Sub-Committee on Public Accounts

Honourable Members, as you are all aware, on 1st October, 2024, my predecessor invoked Standing Order 20 for the purposes of establishing a sub-committee on Public Accounts to further investigate the unresolved issues that were identified by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in the following Reports –

- (1) Review of the Housing Authority Special Investigation on the Allotment of Lots and Tender Processes (*Parliamentary Paper No. 141 of 2024*); and
- (2) Review of the Special Investigation Report on Procurement of Goods and Services – 52nd Asian Development Bank Annual Meeting (*Parliamentary Paper No. 142 of 2024*).

In that respect, please, take note that the Sub-Committee on Public Accounts is hereby established to further investigate the unresolved issues. The Sub-Committee shall specifically examine the findings of the two review Reports and shall report back to the Speaker's Office at the June 2025 Sitting of Parliament.

The Sub-Committee shall comprise the following membership:

- (1) Hon. Ratu Josaia Bulivakarua Niudamu (Chairperson)
- (2) Hon. Joseph Nitya Nand (Deputy Chairperson)
- (3) Hon. Alipate Tuicolo – Member
- (4) Hon. Taito Rokomatu Matasawalevu - Member
- (5) Hon. Ketan Lal - Member
- (6) Hon. Sanjay Kirpal - Member

The Sub-Committee shall be issued its Terms of Reference after the adjournment today.

Status of Hon. S. Nand

Honourable Members, please, kindly take note that I have received official notification from honourable Sachida Nand on his status. He has withdrawn his support to the Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Group of 17 Bloc.

Honourable Sachida Nand has further informed the Speaker's Office that he shall remain as an independent for the remainder of this Parliamentary term and that he will support the group that is being led by honourable Ioane Naivalurua. Now, with respect to the two groups of independents, the Group of 16 Bloc will continue under the leadership of honourable Inia Seruiratu and now the Group of 11 Bloc will continue under the leadership of honourable Ioane Naivalurua. Seating arrangements will be made accordingly.

Membership of Standing Committees

For the information of all honourable Members, I have now received confirmation of the Standing Committees' membership from the Leader of the Government in Parliament, and these shall come into effect on Monday, 17th March 2025.

Honourable Members, please, kindly take note of the following appointments –

Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

- (1) Hon. Aliko Bia will replace Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna
- (2) Hon. Shalen Kumar will fill the existing vacancy

Standing Committee on Social Affairs

Hon. Alipate Tuicolo will fill the existing vacancy.

Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Hon. Taito Matasawalevu will replace Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu.

Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights

- (1) Hon. Lynda Tabuya will replace Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu
- (2) Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu will replace Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Hon. Naisa Tuinaceva will replace Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna

Holi and Ramadan Celebrations

Finally, honourable Members, on the joyous occasion of *Holi*, which will be celebrated tomorrow, I extend warm wishes to our Hindu brothers and sisters, and wishing you a *Holi* filled with vibrant colours, laughter and cherished moments with your loved ones. May this *Holi* bring joy, peace, prosperity and harmony to you, your families and our beloved nation. Let us celebrate the triumph of good over evil and embrace the spirit of unity and love. Happy *Holi*!

I am also mindful of and pay homage to our brothers and sisters of the Muslim faith, who have begun to observe the holy month of *Ramadan* from 28th February, 2025, and I think it will end on 30th March, 2025.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

MR. SPEAKER.- The following Reports were tabled by the 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 Foreign Affairs and Defence

- (1) Parliament of the Republic of Fiji 2022-2023 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 39 of 2025*).
- (2) Consumer Council of Fiji 2022 - 2023 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 123 of 2024*).
- (3) Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission 2019 - 2020 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 41 of 2024*).
- (4) Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission 2020 - 2021 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 42 of 2024*).
- (5) Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission 2021-2022 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 43 of 2024*).
- (6) The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Culture, Heritage & Arts 2022-2023 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 162 of 2024*).
- (7) The iTaukei Land Trust Board 2023 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 155 of 2024*).
- (8) Levuka Town Council 2018 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 173 of 2024*).
- (9) Savusavu Town Council 2014 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 186 of 2024*).
- (10) Savusavu Town Council 2015 Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 187 of 2024*).

Honourable Members, please, take note that the Reserve Bank of Fiji Quarterly Review December 2024 is for information only and will not be referred to any Standing Committee.

HON. I. VASU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I seek your indulgence for me to give a short statement on the Report that was tabled. For the first time in recent memory, the iTLTB Annual Report is being presented to Parliament. While iTLTB is not required to do so, as it operates on a self-funded budget through poundage and other income sources, instead it underscores our commitment to transparency, accountability and good governance.

As we table the iTaukei Land Trust Board 2023 Annual Report, I, as the Minister for iTaukei Affairs wish to reflect on a year of significant progress which saw the charting of the new course for the organisation, with the iTaukei landowners firmly placed in their heart. The iTLTB 2023 Annual Report is a testament to the Board's unwavering commitment, wealth creation, empowerment and

prosperity of iTaukei landowners.

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

Leasing of Valelevu Ground – Nasinu Town Council (Question No. 01/2025)

HON. P. K. BALA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government inform Parliament, whether or not, he has given consent to the Nasinu Town Council to lease the iconic Valelevu Ground for development?

HON. M. K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I respond to the question asked by honourable Bala, I wish to join him by wishing our Hindu brothers and sisters a happy *Holi*. I understand they will be celebrating this tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to emphasise that municipal councils play a critical role in improving services for residents by strengthening revenue resources and the Nasinu Town Council, like any other Council, is actively exploring new revenue streams to reduce reliance on Government grants, while ensuring sustainable urban development.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to respond to the question directly, there have been no formal consent granted for the leasing of the Valelevu Ground for development. However, the Council is exploring a Public Private Partnership (PPP) approach and is currently in the consultation and assessment stage.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to respond to the question directly, there have been no formal consent granted for leasing the Valelevu Ground for development. However, the Council is exploring a Public Private Partnership approach and is currently in the consultation and assessment stage.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, public spaces, like the Valelevu Ground, are valuable community assets and any proposed development must align with urban planning regulations, government policies, and most importantly, the public interest. As such, community consultation is a non-negotiable step in this process. The residents of Nasinu, particularly those in Valelevu, will have a say on how this place is utilised.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the site operates at an annual loss of around \$75,000, and it only generates a revenue of \$32,000. So, there is, indeed, a loss in terms of maintaining the Valelevu Ground. Given the potential for better utilisation, the Council called for an Expression of Interest (EOI) in December 2024, for development partnership and three companies submitted their EOIs. Public consultations were held in January 2025.

I have also met with the Special Administrators, as well as the team from Nasinu Town Council on this project, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I also stressed with them the importance of ensuring that they have a feasibility study before they carry out that development. There is a preliminary study that is currently going on and in the course of that process, there will be a consultation done with all the residents and ratepayers of Nasinu, to ensure that whatever purposes, whatever projects that they are going to have on that ground, will be in the best interest of the people and residents of Nasinu. Something that is very important, Sir, is the opportunity to ensure that councils, like the Nasinu Town Council, explore options, ensuring that they make use of areas within their municipalities so they can

generate revenue for the Council and there is less dependence on the Government to support them carry out projects for their areas. I think it is very important that that needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in this project, the Nasinu Town Council is exploring that avenue, and it is currently in the consultation stage. There will be more consultations held with the residents and ratepayers of Nasinu. The Ministry is going to undertake a feasibility study to ensure that whatever project and whatever income they generate from this project will be of good use to the people of Nasinu and also better utilise the space that has been there for quite some time.

I think the previous Government tried to convert it into a bus terminal to provide some kind of service to link the people that are commuting between Nausori to Suva. I think with that project, it will be beneficial to the people of Nasinu.

We must thank the Administrators and the Council for coming up with this proposal. As I have said, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is still on the consultation stage, and it is something that we are going to also facilitate before we take that on board. Thank you, for the opportunity to respond to the question.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his explanation. Councils have got no power to lease any of the land. It has to be a Ministerial approval. Unfortunately, Nasinu Town Council has gone ahead and signed an MOU. If the honourable Minister can highlight on that MOU because anything to do with any land within the municipality, even to sign an MOU, they need to get the approval from the line Minister.

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have read the MOU. There is no commitment from any of the parties in regard to the project. It just that part of the provisions in that MOU is for the parties to come up to undertake a feasibility study. So, in that feasibility study they are going to carry out extensive consultation. They are also going to consult the residents and the ratepayers of Nasinu. I think I have also said that in my response about that. They are working on preliminary stage at the moment. I think that is very important, because in the process, they also going to do an extensive consultation before I agree to the project.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his explanation. Honourable Minister, when the advertisement went out from the Nasinu Town Council attracting private investors, was it specifically for sports-related activity or was it open-ended for any activity that could be done on that ground?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- I thank the honourable Member for that question. Currently, the zoning for the ground is civic. I think I have also explained the importance of Councils making use or better utilising some of the land that they have, and that is something that they have done.

Part of that process or the project that they are trying to do is to have mixed development, where they have some commercial, as well as some recreational spaces and parking spaces that will be beneficial to the people of Nasinu. That is something that we have right now. It is not purely on commercial but also trying to have some retail space for the people of Nasinu who want to use the space for recreational means.

Plans to Address Rise in Robberies and Street Violence
(Question No. 03/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Policing inform Parliament on the Ministry's plans to address the rise in robberies, house breakings and street violence?

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- I thank the honourable Member, my *kai* from Naitasiri, for the question. I would like to thank him for his concerns on the safety and the security, especially for the people of Naitasiri.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me state at this point that this is my first time as Minister of Policing to answer an Oral Question. At the outset, I wish to also state, as the line minister for Policing, to convey the assurance of the Ministry to the people of Fiji that this Government is committed to ensuring the safety and security of our people. As the line minister, together with the Commissioner of Police, we are committed to carrying out this mission.

Also, for the information of this honourable House and the people of Fiji, the Commissioner and I meet on a weekly basis to review the operations, then discuss a better way of moving forward, both at the policy level and at the operational level.

Before I move on, I would like to directly speak on the strategies on how we are, or what we are doing to address the issues, I wish to first, perhaps, just explain briefly the current situations for the last 24 hours just to us an indication of where we are, in terms of the landscape on policing.

The total number of reports for the day, on the last 24 hours was 375 from all the divisions. For last year, it was 304 for the same period. The increase, for your information, is especially to do with the increase in police activities, particularly related to the uprooting of drugs. On matter of comparison, in the month of March this year, there was a total of 4,703 reports. For the same period last year (2024), it was 5,202, so there was a decrease for the same period last year.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the last three months, cases for aggravated burglary from December last year had recorded a total of 225 cases, and last month recorded a decrease with 159 cases. As for aggravated robbery, last year in December, it recorded a total of 51 cases, decreased in January with a total of 36 cases, and then 35 cases in February. However, there were no cases of street violence reported in the last three months, as according to the Crimes Act 2009, there is no mention of street violence, although it mentions assault as a crime that can be reported.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, most of these perpetrators are employed individuals that account for more than half of all perpetrators, with farmers representing the second largest group of 13.5 percent. The statistics provided by the Fiji Police Force for the last three months reflects the efficacy of the operations and targeted approach undertaken by the Fiji Police Force to address the aforesaid crimes. The rate at which these crimes have continued to be committed are quite unprecedented, which is why the Ministry along with the Fiji Police Force remains steadfast in employing strategies and efforts to combat and eliminate these notorious crimes.

On the strategies, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Commissioner of Police is focused on the three months on improving the operational effectiveness of the Fiji Police Force operations all over Fiji. The Fiji Police Force has been adopting measures that will address these crimes. Firstly, the police is adopting a targeted approach, an intelligence-led operations in identifying the crime red spot zones. We know the red spot zones all over Fiji and the focus of police operations at this time is on those red spot zones.

There is also an effort to deploy the resources forward or prepositioning the capability forward in these red spot zones. This is to ensure that there is a timely response to incidents with quick responses to all instances wherever it happens. This is not an easy task, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

because it requires the movement of troops, or police force and the mobility and the capacity to move things forward, especially it talks about moving capability or capacity forward to the hot spots.

As I speak, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a taskforce deployed in Kadavu to address the issue of drugs. Likewise, also in Vanua Levu. It does not mean that Kadavu and Vanua Levu are the real red spots. I know there are other red spots all over Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, addressing the issues of how we confront crime and drugs ahead of us, there is a greater effort by the Commissioner at this point to improve our community policing efforts. This is not an easy task. It is quite a difficult one and it requires a full commitment of the whole force in addressing the community. It also demands our engagement with the community to rebuild the trust and the confidence towards the Police Force. However, I am encouraged to see there has been great improvements in this, and I would like to specifically mention our engagement with the community, Mr. Speaker, Sir. There has been MOUs signed between the Fiji Police Force and the Municipal Council, and I thank the honourable Minister responsible for that.

I believe that the Municipal Council has a greater role to play in being the custodians of the municipalities. If they could do that and improve that, it will really take a bit of the load away from the Fiji Police Force, to be the custodians of the municipalities area of responsibility. I do not know what the law says on this, but I believe if you can work on that, it will improve the work and lessen the load on the police.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Fiji Police are optimising CCTV technology and surveillance purposes to extract concrete evidence, like offenders, vehicles and their movements and locations of suspected activities and other key evidence that can lead to apprehensions. All driven towards this, is the focus of the police at this point to disrupt, de-stabilise and defeat these criminal activities, and finally, we are able to do that to dominate those areas, where the criminals have taken a hold on.

Na kena vosa vaka-itaukei, sa levu na mate ni vukavuka, Turaga Sipika, sa vakawakana ena vei tiki ni vanua, vei tikotiko kei na vei korokoro sa vakawakana na mate vukavuka oqo. Sa cakacaka levu ni Ovisa me vakarusa na waka ni vukavuka oqo ena vei tikotiko kece. Sa sega ni tavi rawarawa.

[There is too many leprosy, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the infection of this contagious disease has taken roots in every village and communities. The Police face a daunting task to eradicate the root cause of leprosy from our communities. It is not an easy task, but I believe, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that it can be done, and it will be done.]

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for the answer given. My question to the honourable Minister is, while the crime rate is actually going up, on behalf of the victims, in terms of recovery, there are a lot of victims whose stuff gets stolen but cannot be recovered. Either it has been stolen, or assets, or household items. What is the Ministry doing in terms of bringing in policies so that there can be some form of recovery?

I will give a typical example. My mother lost close to around \$6,000. The perpetrator is in jail, but there is no recovery. And not just for me, there are so many victims like that, that the recovery is basically impossible. So, what would the Ministry be doing, or if there are any plans in the future, to come up with some sort of policy to ensure that there could be some form of recovery for the victims, Mr. Speaker, Sir?

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is really bordering into a new question, but it is associated with crime. But I shall attempt to, it is talking about the

exhibits. Normally, the general rule is that the exhibits are never released unless there is a request through the court. If they do approve that, then those exhibits are released.

But there are also arrangements that could be done within the various respective divisions with the Police officers that are responsible to assist and help in that. I understand what the honourable Member is saying. There are some exhibits when they are actually returned, they are already damaged and not in a state to be returned. But the bottom line is about reviewing our Acts, regulations and laws and our Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) for the Police. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his answers. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Baulevu farmers, firstly that is where I am hail from, are the victims of this crime. They often see that their rootcrops are stolen, even the Baulevu High School Science Lab was broken into twice, in which we lost a number of apparatus. There is Baulevu Police post, hardworking Police officers are there, and the Police Post was given one vehicle. Often, we have seen the vehicle taken away by the Nausori Police Station. Can I ask the honourable Minister, does the Police have enough vehicles to counter this problem?

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for his question. I have a wish list that I would want, ideally, I would like to see vehicles deployed at each community post or at each station. We are working towards that, there is a bigger plan on the capability to posture ourselves better in the forward paths of our positions. But there are ways and means of addressing those. Now, I am just mentioning the ability of the community to help and assist, which is all possible in some of these community posts, but we are trying our best to make sure that the vehicles are there.

I understand what the honourable Member is saying that some of these vehicles here are extracted or pulled out and redeployed somewhere else in some situations. I am sure in some of these rural areas, if there are horses available, during my time as the Commissioner, we deployed horses forward or motorbikes, et cetera. I know, but there is a better plan in place, the Commissioner is working towards that, as the ideal situation is all positions to have a permanent vehicle deployed there.

MR. SPEAKER.- I will allow one more supplementary, if there is one.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. My question is related to the use of new technologies to create safe public spaces. I would like to know from the honourable Minister whether any specific budget is allocated to buy these technologies and train Police officers, so that they can monitor from the Police station and combat those kinds of crimes. Thank you.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. This is a question on improving the capability and capacity of the Police to be operationally effective. Yes, there are plans to do that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this includes bodycams, sprays et cetera, monitoring devices. There are plans to do that and we plan to submit our budget in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Extreme Hazard at the Lautoka Rubbish Dump
(Question No. 04/2025)

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

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must declare my interest, I am from Lautoka City. Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government inform Parliament on the Ministry's plans to address the extreme hazard at the Lautoka Rubbish Dump?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for his question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to begin, I would like to clarify that the Lautoka Council Council operates and manages waste disposal services at the Vunato Landfill. This facility not only serves Lautoka City but also serves Nadi Town, as well as surrounding rural areas, offshore islands and major tourism and commercial hubs, such as Denarau.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Vunato Landfill is an open aerobic evaporation dumpsite that has been in operation since 1968, about 57 years ago. It was initially intended to serve the Fiji Sugar Corporation and Lautoka City citizens but has since expanded to cater for a much larger population. The site spans approximately 50 acres and currently receives an average of 75.5 tonnes of waste per day. Approximately 40,330 tonnes of waste dumped at Vunato Dumpsite annually.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to manage waster efficiently, the landfill is structured into six waste disposal cells, a special waste disposal area, a green waste disposal area, chipping area and a composting facility. Despite these efforts, the landfill remains a challenge due to the increased waste generation and environmental concerns.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, waste disposal within the dumpsite follows a structured approach to ensure efficient management and minimise environmental impact. Rubbish is initially deposited in the central areas of each cells and then systematically pushed towards the edges using a bulldozer.

The Council, Mr. Speaker, Sir, separates special waste such as hospital waste, dead animals, condemned food, broken glasses, et cetera, that are deemed hazardous. At the moment, they currently dig holes and bury those waste under supervision from the Council's security, the Council's Landfill Officer and the clients who require these specific burials. Sometimes, they bring the police along to supervise the dumping of those special waste.

To address the safe disposal of hazardous waste, a designated special waste cell has been established in the middle of the dump. This area is strategically located away from the water's edge and mangrove system to prevent contamination and protect the surrounding natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, all market waste, grass cuttings, tree shrub pruning, green waste from cleanup campaigns, as well as cyclone cleanups and waste from known fruit and vegetable suppliers are composted. In 2024, 174 tonnes of green waste was collected, composted and sold 14.8 tonnes of compost from the Council office, generating revenue of close to \$5,000 for the Council. From 2011 to 2024, approximately 2,502 tonnes of green waste was collected as well, and 147 tonnes of compost was created, generating a revenue of close to \$45,000 for the Council.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I believe there was some fire emanating from the dumpsite at the end of 2022 as well as 2023. In the event of a fire at the dumpsite, the primary firefighting strategy is to isolate the affected area and prevent the fire from spreading to other sections. The dump site is divided into six cells, each separated by a water channel. Once the fire is contained within a specific cell, heavy machinery, such as bulldozers and excavators are deployed to create additional firebreaks, further limiting the spread of the fire.

What are some of the plans of the Council to address those issues? Mr. Speaker, Sir, we recognise the urgency of improving waste management. The Government, in partnership with international agencies, has initiated a long-term strategy, as follows:

(1) Western Division Sanitary Landfill

In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United

Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the ICRBE project will support the development of a new sanitary landfill for the Western Division. The project also aims to rehabilitate existing dumpsites, including Vunato, transforming them into material sorting facilities to improve waste separation and recycling. The Western Landfill Project is adopting a phased approach, beginning with the rehabilitation of selected dumpsites and transitioning towards a fully operational sanitary landfill.

(2) Public-Private Partnership Model

Through the support of Asian Development Bank (ADB), they have engaged a Transaction Advisor who is currently conducting a feasibility study to determine the best solutions for the Western Division. We have also been having consultations with the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, as well as iTaukei Land Trust Board (iTTLTB) officials in the West, to identify some possible areas or sites that could be used for this particular project.

(3) Environmental Rehabilitation of Vunato Dumpsite

The Ministry, together with UNDP and SPC, is spearheading the rehabilitation of the two dumpsites in the Western Division. As part of this initiative, appropriate waste management equipment will be provided, and plans for a phased closure of Vunato Dumpsite will be implemented.

On the targetted timeline for this particular project, Mr. Speaker, Sir, technical feasibility assessments have commenced, and two site visits were completed in February and March 2025. The transition towards a modern, environmentally, friendly and sustainable sanitary landfill will be implemented progressively in alignment with feasibility outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, addressing those management challenges at Vunato is a priority of the Coalition Government. The Government remains committed to ensuring a cleaner and a more sustainable future by adopting innovative waste management strategies, investing in modern infrastructure and collaborating with development partners.

These initiatives, Mr. Speaker, Sir, will not only improve waste disposal services, but also promote a circular economy, minimise environmental impact and enhance the wellbeing of our communities.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I want to thank the honourable Minister for his very honest answers. You can see that a lot is being done, but the question that arises in my head, Mr. Speaker, is that in view of the toxicity of that actual rubbish dump build up how not just Lautoka City pretty much all the surrounding towns and areas, have we identified already different area that they will have to relocate to, or somewhere where we can actually draw that toxicity to Lautoka was not just a fume and flies all that goes with it. I know for a fact that there is a lot of scavenging that goes on, in that particular area. That is a real issue, whether the security is there or not. In today's world, there are many ways to do that. Is there an area that has been identified? How fast can all that be done because it is very toxic?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- It is a very important issue. This is because the site has been there for the past 57 years, and what the Council has been doing is, they have separated the different spaces within the dump site where they were able to contain some of these toxic wastes that the honourable Member is referring to, but what is happening right now is a big damage control.

Even though we have the security, the managers, that is their station at the landfill, also

managing those scavengers that come to the area to try to look for recycled materials. I think in my earlier response, I had also mentioned that work is currently in progress to identify a suitable site within Lautoka and the place will be manageable to manage because we are also trying to include other Western Division dump sites. That is something that we are really working on.

We are so thankful that an ADB consultant came on board. They have started with the work already and what is happening right now is we are trying to look for good areas, ideal locations that are far from settlements that can be used for this particular purpose. We are hopeful that within the next six months, we will be able to produce a report on the progress of the project that we are doing now.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the honourable Minister for his responses. We fully understand the challenge that the Municipal Councils face when it comes to waste management. Talking about toxic materials in the climate agenda space, particularly when we deal with methane, there are two main causes - agriculture and, of course, the dumps. Has there been any serious studies conducted so that we can convert these wastes into useful purposes, particularly the use of methane or any matter, recycling? You talked about compost as well.

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the information of the honourable Member and this august House, this is one the purposes of having the work done by the ADB consultant, which is to advise Government on some things we can and need to do to address some of the issues that we are currently facing at the moment.

Also, part of the process of identifying landfill is we also need to rehabilitate some of the current dump sites, and that is something that we are also going to consider. As I have said, it is part of the work in progress at the moment and we are hopeful that we will get some very good advice from the consultant, on how best we can work on managing and rehabilitating the dump sites, as well as exploring other areas of maximising some of the current waste in the landfill before we relocate the dump sites. It is a very important exercise, so we are also collaborating with the Ministry of Environment to assist us with that project.

MR. SPEAKER.- That was the last question and I thank the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government.

Honourable Members, this is a convenient time to take our recess. There is one more Oral Question for the day, but we will deal with that when the House resumes.

Honourable Members, we will now suspend proceedings for our break, and we will resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.38 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.15 a.m.

Update - Viseisei Village Seawall
(Question No. 05/2025)

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU asked the Government, upon notice:

Viseisei Village was promised to have their seawall repaired and extended. Can the honourable Minister for Agriculture and Waterways update Parliament on the work and plans to complete this work as the houses close to the shoreline need urgent protection?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question regarding the repair and extension of the seawall at Viseisei Village. This is a matter of great importance, not only to the people of Viseisei, but to the entire nation, given the historical and cultural significance of the *Vanua o Vunisei, vei ira saka na Turaga na Tui Vuda*.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to begin by reaffirming the unwavering commitment of this Government and my Ministry in particular, to the protection and preservation of Viseisei Village. This is not just a project. It is a solemn promise to the people of Viseisei, a village with historical significance. It is a place of immense cultural heritage, and we are steadfast in our resolve to deliver this critical infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government is acutely aware of the urgent need to protect the homes and livelihoods of the people of Viseisei Village. Coastal erosion and the impacts of climate change pose a direct threat to their safety and well-being, and this project is not only about building a seawall. It is also about safeguarding the lives, properties and heritage of our people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to provide a detailed update on its current status, and plans for the Viseisei Village seawall project, and to assure this august House and the people of Viseisei, that this Government is fully committed to its timely completion. The journey to address the urgent need for a seawall in Viseisei Village began with a formal request from the community on the 7th of November 2019. This request highlighted the growing threat of coastal erosion and the need for immediate action.

In response, a team from the Waterways Division conducted a comprehensive evaluation and survey of the site on 17th December, 2021. This assessment was critical in determining the necessary measures to protect the village from the relentless forces of nature. However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we are all aware, the COVID-19 pandemic brought down unprecedented challenges to our nation, leading to severe budget constraints across all sectors. These financial limitations delayed the commencement of the project, as the Government had to prioritise resources to address the immediate economic and health crisis.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in 2023, the Government renewed its commitment to this vital project. Following a ministerial visit on 27th April, 2023, led by the Office of the Prime Minister, in collaboration with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways and the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development, underscored the urgency of protecting Viseisei Village. This visit also led to the formalisation of a statement of undertaking between the Government and the Viseisei community.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, under this agreement, the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways committed to three key actions:

- (1) The provision of the site investigation assessment report, which has been completed and ensures that the project is based on accurate and up to date data.
- (2) The provision of the seawall engineering design, plans and project costings, which have also been finalised; and
- (3) The utilisation of the existing hire of machineries programmes to engage contractors for the construction of the seawall.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in return, the Viseisei community has demonstrated their commitment, by granting site access, waving fishing rights, and supplying rock boulders to support the construction process. This partnership between the Government and the community is a testament to our shared determination to see this project through to completion.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform this august House, that the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, is working advance this project. We are currently finalising the necessary administrative and technical processes to ensure its successful delivery.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also wish to update the House on the latest developments regarding the funding for this project. Given the budget limitations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, the Office of the Prime Minister has taken the lead in securing the necessary funding.

The Project Planning and Facilitation Division of the Office of the Prime Minister is actively working to secure grant aid for this project. A grant agreement has been prepared and is currently being vetted by the Office of the Solicitor-General. Sir, once the vetting process is completed, we will finalise the funding arrangements and move swiftly into the construction phase.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to reassure this august House, the honourable Members and the people of Viseisei Village, that the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways is fully committed to this project. We are working to ensure that all necessary approvals and procurement processes are completed as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can say that Viseisei is not just any village, it is a chiefly village of significance to Fijian history. It is a place of immense cultural and historical significance, and my Ministry will not rest until this project is completed.

Our goal is to ensure that the seawall is constructed this year, providing essential protection to the homes and families of Viseisei Village. It is a duty we owe to the people of Viseisei and to the legacy of our ancestors.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I once again thank the honourable Member for bringing this matter to our attention. I assure this august House and the people of Viseisei, that the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, will spare no effort in ensuring the successful completion of this project. We will deliver on our promise, to protect Viseisei Village, for it is not just a settlement, it is a chiefly village, a symbol of our heritage and a testament of our resilience as a nation.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his extensive and detailed explanation. The team that had approached me had indicated that they understand the plans and the details that will be required to protect the coastal areas of Viseisei. The issue that they have asked, if there could be temporary measures, because the houses are so close to the sea now that when there is high water and waves, its crashing on to the houses around the coastline. They have asked if boulders can be put around the coast just to protect the waves from hammering the houses on the coastline.

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the issue raised by the honourable Member is taken and we will see what we can do to address the point that has been raised, in particular, putting in place some temporary measures. We are in a position to do that.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the honourable Minister for Agriculture and commend his work; and thank him for narrating the short-term outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this has been an ongoing issue, and it is a nationwide issue in terms of erosion at riverbanks or coastlines. So, my question to the honourable Minister for Agriculture is, that having heard the short-term outcomes for a particular area, can he highlight some of the long-term strategies being developed to address the ongoing risks associated with climate change and coastal erosion?

HON. V.T.T.K. RAYALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for his supplementary question. However, if I start talking about the long-term measures that he is asking for, I will take a whole day and I will take a whole week because it is not as simple as one, two, three. The whole works will have to include a number of Ministries put together.

When it comes to the protection of our water sources up in the hills, we will need the Ministry of Forestry in terms of replanting of trees, re-establishing the buffer zones and the forest reserves that used to be there, and then we will start coming downstream. As we come downstream, riverbank protection works are quite costly and then we also have farming areas. Our farmers love to plant beside the riverbanks. Why? Because of the fertility issue. But, again, some of the agronomic practices that are being employed, and the indiscriminate cutting of trees is contributing to further erosion.

The latest index stands at around 500 tonnes of soil that is being lost every year and that is a huge amount. You have to visit the river mouths such as Sigatoka and Ba River mouths, you see all the soil. The silt that is being deposited are coming from the hills and the riverbanks.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have highlighted just a few of the measures that can be taken - the replanting of trees, the riverbank protection works including infrastructure, the protection of our river sources, damming and opening up of the weirs, so it will be a big task, but all these things also cost money, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Written Questions

Data on Complaints Received (Question No. 06/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Education update Parliament on the following in relation to complaints received by the Ministry over the past three years:

- (a) the number of complaints received per year per Division; and
- (b) the number of complaints sorted into broad classifications, such as transport, classroom, teacher availability, student related issued, et cetera?

¹ HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response in accordance with

¹ Editor's Note: Rely to Written Question No. 06/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education under Standing Order 45(3) is appended As Annexure I.

Standing Order 45(2).

Number and Nature of Complaints Lodged
(Question No. 07/2025)

HON. K.K. LAL asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Justice inform Parliament on the number and nature of complaints lodged by the general public and the private sector in 2024?

² HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have my written responses.

Work Permits Issued to Overseas Workers
(Question No. 08/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Immigration update Parliament on work permits issued to overseas workers from August 2023 to January 2025, including the following, the:

- (a) total number of work permits issued;
- (b) breakdown of work permits issued for the public and private sectors; and
- (c) average processing time for work permit applications?

³ HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby table my response to Written Question No. 08/2025.

Engagement of Advisors in Ministries
(Question No. 09/2025)

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

Can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics update Parliament on the engagement of advisors across all Ministries from January 2023 to January 2025, including the following:

- (a) The total annual expenditure on hiring advisors;
- (b) A breakdown of the costs distinguishing Government funding and contribution from donor or development partners; and
- (c) The number of advisors hired each year, categorised by Ministry?

⁴ HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

² Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 07/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Justice under Standing Order 45(3) is appended As Annexure II.

³ Reply to Written Question No. 08/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Immigration under Standing Order 45(3) is appended As Annexure III.

⁴ Reply to Written Question No. 09/2025 tabled by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics under Standing Order 45(3) is appended as Annexure IV.

I also want to request, your permission, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because I have got two other questions, to say that. I was not in the Business Committee, but I will be raising this in the next Business Committee because the Opposition has got into the habit of asking questions and treating us as, kind of, research officers for them.

The Executive has a process, Mr. Speaker, Sir. These figures go through the Annual Reports, Audit Reports, and it is out of order for the Opposition to bring in questions of this nature when the answers to those questions would be available through a process. Otherwise, the Executive will be forever doing research for the Opposition and producing statistics that have not passed their gestation period because things can change. I want to make that point, Sir.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hogwash!

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

I thank the, honourable Deputy Prime Minister, the point is taken. It is a matter that really should be dealt with in the Business Committee. I think it is the responsibility of Members of the Business Committee to delve into the details, as explained by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Court Case Statistics – 2023 to 2025
(Question No.10/2025)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, to add a little flavour with respect to what the honourable Deputy Prime Minister spoke about, he is one who set the precedent when he was in Opposition. My question is:

Can the honourable Minister for Justice inform Parliament on the following statistics from January 2023 to January 2025 –

- (a) the total number of pending cases in the High Court, Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court of Fiji, categorised by year;
- (b) a breakdown of pending cases by type (civil, criminal, or other categories) categorised by year; and
- (c) the average time taken to dispose of cases in each court?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I refer to Standing Order 44(5), which reads, and I quote:

“If a statement is included in a question, the member asking the question is responsible for the accuracy of the statement.”

According to the Ministerial Assignment, Legal Notice No. 28, dated 18th June, 2024, the Judiciary is not under my assigned responsibility, it is with the honourable Attorney-General. I am unable to answer that question because it refers to another Ministry.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, in any case, would you provide a written answer?

⁵ HON. S.D. TURAGA.- I will do so later due to its complexity and it refers to data.

⁵ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 10/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Justice under Standing Order 45(3) is appended As Annexure V.

Newly Introduced Fees and Revised Charges
(Question No. 11/2025)

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics update Parliament on all newly introduced fees and revised charges approved by Cabinet from 2023 to 2024 that are unrelated to the VAT increase to 15 percent, including the following –

- (a) A detailed breakdown of all new Government-imposed fees, levies, and service charges introduced during this period, categorised by Government ministry or agency;
- (b) A comprehensive list of all new fees and charges introduced by each municipal council during this period; and
- (c) A list of existing fees and charges that have been increased, including the specific amount of increase, presented separately for Government Ministries and each Municipal Council?

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

MR. SPEAKER.- On the seventh Written Question, I can see that honourable Viam Pillay is not present and under Standing Order 45(6), the question has lapsed.

(Question No. 12/2025 lapses)

Update on the External Review Committee
(Question No. 13/2025)

HON. R.R. SHARMA asked the Government, upon notice:

In November 2023, the Higher Education Commission Fiji appointed an external review committee to assess three universities. Can the honourable Minister for Education update Parliament on the committee's activities and findings to date?

⁶ HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby table my response according to the Standing Orders.

Statistics on Official Overseas Trips - FSC Chairman
(Question No. 14/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry inform Parliament on the following –

- (a) How many official overseas travel engagements has the Chairman of Fiji Sugar Corporation taken since his appointment to date and to which countries; and
- (b) The total expenditure, inclusive of allowances, salary if any, travel allowances, meals and accommodation?

⁶ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 13/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education under Standing Order 45(3) is appended As Annexure VI.

⁷ HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have the answer, I am tabling it as well.

**REVIEW OF THE BBNJ AGREEMENT UNDER THE
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA**

HON. G.E. LEUNG.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 130(2), I move:

That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence review the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I can confirm that the honourable Attorney-General has provided me with copies of the Treaty and Written Analysis as required under Standing Order 130(2). Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 130(3), the Treaty and Analysis stand referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence for consideration and review. The Committee may table a report to Parliament not later than 30 days from today.

END OF WEEK STATEMENTS

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, each Member may speak for up to 10 minutes, with the 10-minute response by the Minister responsible for the subject matter of the Member's speech. No seconder is required and there will be no debate.

Health Sector in Fiji

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the healthcare system in Fiji is and has been degrading for a number of years. While we have failed badly to ensure that we have a healthy population, we need to ensure that we have proper healthcare facilities with world-class treatment available in Fiji. While the ideal scenario would be to focus on prevention rather than cure, we have reached a state in Fiji that we have to prioritise curative healthcare.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have failed in all fronts whether it be infrastructure, human resources, medical supplies, biomedical equipment or technology. While on one side we have public facilities failing to upgrade and maintaining the equipment we have, two private hospitals based on the PPP approach, namely Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Children's Hospital and Aspen Medical Hospital are flourishing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in our public hospitals we have many biomedical equipment that are not working for the past number of months or years. One such machine is the lithotripsy machine at CWM Hospital, which can be used to remove kidney stones without a single cut to the body. This needs to be fixed urgently.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these three hospitals are already changing the healthcare system in Fiji. While Health Care Fiji (Pte) Limited through Aspen Medical is currently trying their level best to improve the infrastructure and provide the world-class treatment, Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Children's Hospital and Pacific Specialist Healthcare are already providing world-class treatment.

⁷ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 14/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry under Standing Order 45(3) is appended As Annexure VII.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a lot has been said about Aspen Medical managing both, Lautoka Hospital and Ba Hospital. Let me put it on record. Fijians, through FNPF, own 80 percent shares in Health Care (Fiji) Pte Limited, Aspen Medical only has 20 percent shares to manage Lautoka and Ba Hospitals. So, \$120 million being drained out of Fiji is not true. Once this PPP approach is fully up and running, the major beneficiary would be the members of FNPF, Mr. Speaker. The major shareholders in Health Care (Fiji) Pte Limited is FNPF. Health Care (Fiji) Pte Limited has already invested more than \$40 million in setting up Ba Hospital and upgrading Lautoka Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, since I only have 10 minutes, if I start to mention what Health Care (Fiji) Pte Limited through Aspen Medical has done to improve the healthcare facility, I will need another 30 minutes. Therefore, I will table the detailed list of improvements in this august House for the information of the Members and the public.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, briefly, at Ba Mission Hospital, Health Care (Fiji) Pte Limited was handed over a building and the following was done to run it as a hospital:

- Surgical cases commenced including free operating services in the new operating theatre.
- Installation of the state-of-art laundry.
- Installation of Australian standard laboratory equipment.
- Complete redesign and construction of Central Sterile Services Department (CSSD) to Australian standard.
- Installation of a new mortuary service at Ba.
- Construction of a new building to expand the Radiology Department and installation of new CT machine (the only subdivisional hospital in Fiji to have a CT scan).
- Provision of six extra beds in the Emergency Department.
- Air-conditioning of all wards. The Heating, Ventilation and Air-conditioning (HVAC) in operating theatres are now up to Australian standard.
- Mental Health Unit.
- Procurement of new 4x4 ambulance for patient transfer.
- Commencement of work to obtain Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation.

I thank Health Care (Fiji) Pte Limited in giving world-class service at Ba Mission Hospital and we look forward to the same as Lautoka Hospital once the concession agreement has been reviewed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, having said that if we want to improve the healthcare system in Fiji, we need to engage other stakeholders and investors into public-private partnerships. Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital has given the gift of life to 363 children through heart surgeries, 27,251 free heart screening and 38,838 free general and specialist medical consultation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we should consider engaging Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital to run a fully-fledged paediatric hospital as there is space available in front of the hospital. Let us give this piece of land to Sai Prema Foundation to build a world-class paediatric hospital.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, just imagine these surgeries costs close to around \$100,000 per surgery. Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Children's Hospital has spent more than \$20 million to carry out this heart surgery. I wish to thank Sai Prema Foundation and the Director, Mr. Sumeet Tappoo, for his service to the nation. Sai Prema Foundation spent \$25 million in building the hospital. It is because of a person like Mr. Sumeet Tappoo and Sai Prema Foundation that 363 children and their families are smiling today.

If we continue to fix the public health system through the Ministry, it will take ages to improve the service delivery and provide world-class healthcare services in Fiji. While we rightly commend development at CWM Hospital with its Catheterization Laboratory and Lautoka Hospital open-heart surgeries both in-house and under outsourcing model, we must also recognise and applaud the unprecedented achievement of Pacific Specialist Healthcare (PSH), a 100 percent locally-owned healthcare provider that has, without any State assistance, successfully established both a fully-functional Catheterization Laboratory and independently conducted open-heart surgeries ranging from single to quadral vessel operation.

They have pioneered minimally invasive low-blood loss procedure to cater for patients with specific religious needs, showcasing not just clinical excellence but deep cultural sensitivity. Their world-class facilities extend across two major hospitals in Suva and Nadi, with 130 beds and a scope of service-discovery - neurosurgery, orthopaedics, plastic surgery, dental surgery, urology, gynaecology and open-heart surgery, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, PSH Hospital is not only advancing health outcomes but bringing people together. They have invited faith-based and cultural organisations, including Fiji Muslimi Muslim League, Arya Pratindhi Sabha, Shree Sanatan Dharm Pratindhi Sabha of Fiji and Great Councils of Chiefs onto their boards. As a result, members of these communities now access General Practitioner consultation for only \$7.50 at any time during the day or night, Mr. Speaker. Sugarcane and cash crop farmers also benefit from the same low-cost consultation,

Mr. Speaker, Pacific Specialist Healthcare is already being recognised regionally, and a representative of Nauru's Ministry of Health is now on their board. They are also in discussions with other Pacific Island nations to broaden this collaboration, fostering regionalism in healthcare, proudly led by Fiji by Pacific Specialist Healthcare.

Pacific Specialist Healthcare is a model of innovation, affordability and accessibility. The hospital is also establishing its own foundation to provide free surgeries to the truly needed, investing in local medication manufacturing facilities, a super sterile ICU to support future organ transplants and even laying the groundwork for radiation therapy, all with no government-funding till to-date, Mr. Speaker.

Pacific Special Healthcare are not just counting beds, they are reducing hospital stay through technological advancement such as stone laser technologies, advanced neurosurgery aspirators, radiofrequency ablation of soft tumours, laparoscopic procedures and advanced cardiac centre. Patients are often discharged the next day after a major surgery at PSH Hospital, helping cut costs and recovery time for patients. PSH Hospital is also currently pursuing radiation therapy and awaiting State approval and international Atomic Energy Agency collaboration that will make advanced cancer treatment available right here in Fiji for Fijians and the Pacific community.

If we truly believe in improving healthcare through PPP, then PSH Hospital should be entrusted with managing Nadi and Labasa Hospitals. They have proven that local innovation can outperform outsourced model. With investors ready what PSH Hospital needs now is Government support through tax incentives, access to PPP framework and opportunities to manage public facilities such as Nadi and Labasa Hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, let us not overlook at what is happening right in our backyard. Pacific Specialist Healthcare Hospital is a Fijian success story from grassroot to healthcare innovation. A hospital built on efficiency, compassion, cultural inclusion and intellect excellence. If we truly want to uplift healthcare in this country, let us make what has already been working for our people, by our people.

I wish to thank Mr. Parvish Nikesh Kumar and his team for uplifting the healthcare system in Fiji. We should look at privatising Fiji Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Services. We have big names in the pharmaceutical industry that are willing to assist Government through PPP approach in ensuring proper logistics and supply chain is always maintained. While we can build hospitals, but for the doctors to perform efficiently, they need medical supplies, consumables and medicine.

Mr. Speaker, Fiji Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Services has a budget of \$95 million and we should not have an issue of out of stock as we cannot give world-class service in our hospitals without proper medical supplies.

Mr. Speaker, PPP model comes at a cost, but for Government the biggest asset it has is its populace. People have contributed to socio-economic development of the country by paying direct and indirect tax to Government. So at least we owe that much to our people, we need to take care of our population and to ensure that no one loses his or her loved ones because they were either not able to afford treatment or treatment was not available in Fiji.

The only way to advance quickly and efficiently into providing world-class healthcare assistance is through Public-Private Partnership. We need to have couple of players when it comes to PPP as it will promote and provide healthy competition and also ensure that for any unforeseen circumstances the healthcare system does not collapse.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I would like to wish all the *Hindi* followers a happy and joyful *Holi*.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable Alvick Maharaj for his End of Week Statement. In response to his Statement, first of all, I would just like to pay tribute to one of Fiji's finest doctors who has passed away a few days ago - Dr. Moape Bavou, a Specialist Obstetrics & Gynaecology (O&G) Surgeon, whom I had the privilege of learning together at the then Fiji School of Medicine. We both entered in 1999 and graduated in 2004 - Class of 2004. He chose the field of O&G, especially as a surgeon, and championed women's health. He did amazing work, miracle, Sir, for women in terms of cancer, et cetera. As a brother and a friend, I pay tribute to the work and the legacy that he has left behind and I wish his immediate family and the extended family peace during these challenging times.

Before also replying to the End of Week Statement, I would just like to commend our Fiji Emergency Medical Assistance Team (FEMAT) team that was given a re-verification certificate by World Health Organization yesterday. Sir, FEMAT was born out of medical work trying to be done in an emergency situation, especially after *TC Winston*. It is usually held every five years and from 2019, since its first verification, the re-verification process started in January 2020 with phase one and yesterday, we had the team from WHO, together with the examiners from New Zealand and Australia, who are here, and they gave us the green light. Our FEMAT team has done marvellous work, not only within Fiji, but within the region as well.

In replying to the End of Week Statement, I welcome the statement by honourable Maharaj, especially on the title: The Health Sector in Fiji. I had only wished that in the last eight years as an Assistant Minister back then, he could have also made a similar statement back then. But, Sir, I think he has seen the light and rightly so.

In responding to the End of Week Statement, I would just like to highlight the health sector in Fiji. The health sector in Fiji is a topic of discussion from the time when we were in Opposition until now. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government is doing a lot of work in trying to improve the health status in Fiji.

The honourable Assistant Minister for Health, in his response to His Excellency's most gracious Address, highlighted a number of programmes and infrastructure improvement that have been done by the Ministry and continuously to do and plan ahead in trying to improve the healthcare sector within Fiji.

Honourable Maharaj also touched on the biomedical equipment out there. He has highlighted delay in repairs. Just for the information of honourable Members, since taking office, that is one of the special teams within the Ministry. The Ministry has thought that it should increase the capacity, that is the Biomedical Division within the Ministry. As it is, we are training more biomedical staff within the Ministry and they are doing marvellous work, not only at their headquarters FPBS (Fiji Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Services) but they are now in the divisions, the main hospitals and for some, we have tried to put them right down to the subdivisional hospitals which is one of the achievements so far.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of the Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) of which the honourable member has highlighted in his end of week statement, I would like to mention in this august House that the PPP in the Lautoka and Ba Hospitals have improved in the last two years, we have engaged the HCF Aspen to ensure the services are good, however, as the honourable Minister for Finance had mentioned that there was some concern about the way in which the two hospitals got handed over to Aspen. Government is now paying about \$12 million per month to keep the services of both hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, some of the characteristics of a good PPP arrangement would be risk savvy, close collaboration and value for money. Unfortunately, these PPP characteristics were not done right and as it is, the Government is playing catch up in trying to right that wrong that was done, since the inception of the PPP which services Lautoka and Ba hospitals, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The Government is committed to improving this arrangement and we are in close discussions and collaborations with the relevant stakeholders as we speak, to try and make sense of the previous contractual agreement and now with thorough discussions with the interested parties, I am sure that we will come up with a contractual agreement that both parties will be accommodating to.

The other aspect, Mr. Speaker, Sir, talked about the private hospitals that have been set up, yes, I agree. It is, for me, one of the finest private hospitals here in Fiji, the service that they are doing. Since taking office, when they came to me, Mr. Speaker, Sir, they came with an idea, that they wanted to build a hospital and I gave them the blessings, and within a few months, the hospital was up.

They usually put their money where their mouth is, and they do work as it is. They have some ambitious plans in the future especially for pharmaceuticals and a radiotherapy centre. The Ministry, through Government will always support these types of initiatives because it aids investment into the country, and it assists the Ministry in terms of providing adequate healthcare in the private sector. We are looking forward to ongoing collaborations with PSH from now and into the future.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of PPP, I must mention in this House, that Fiji has a public funded and referral health system. And, if one was to look at looking after, say, Nadi Hospital. That cannot be looked after in isolation, as a referral hospital, you have nursing station, health centres that refers to sub-divisional hospitals, and sub-divisional hospitals refer to the tertiary hospital or the divisional hospital.

That is an issue also that we have seen, that is the problem - the PPP arrangement Government and Lautoka Hospital, because it is a referral hospital. When that was done, the facilities surrounding it, in which the general outpatient and the special outpatient clinics, they were decentralised to those facilities, they were not brought up to par so that they can do the work that they are supposed to do. As I have said, we are playing catch-up, but nevertheless, the Government is committed to do

everything it can do to improve the health services within Fiji, to improve the working conditions of our staff, the remuneration, and to ensure that as we partner for new PPPs, we have to take the learnings from what we have learned so far in the current setting, in terms of the PPP arrangement in the Government and Aspen.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in essence, Oh! I forgot, the children's hospital, the honourable Maharaj has mentioned about the Sai Prema Hospital, Mr. Speaker, Sir. The Government of the day opened its ears to what Sai Prema Hospital has requested. It is through the Government that we were able to fund, give a grant of \$4 million for them to continue to do their service. They are doing marvellous work, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of correcting congenital heart defects. With those few words, as I said, the Government is committed to improving the healthcare service and the healthcare outcomes of the people of Fiji. *Vinaka*.

Scoping Mission - Kava and Agricultural Exports

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament; *ni sa bula re*.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in early February this year, I had the privilege to lead a delegation to the United States, for the scoping mission focused on *kava* and agricultural exports. It was a joint initiative involving the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives and Small and Medium Enterprises and the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, in collaboration with the Fiji Trade Commission's Northern American team.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, *kava* is a leading contributor to our agricultural GDP, a top non-sugar agricultural export owner, and it provides vital sources of livelihood for a quarter of our agricultural household. *Kava* surely is a billion-dollar industry and its importance in Fiji's economy is significant. As a farmer of *yaqona*, I recognise the importance of understanding market needs and demands. This knowledge serves as a powerful motivator for farmers looking for increasing their production.

The global *kava* market, in particular, the United States, is experiencing sustainable growth that may exceed current perceptions. The United States, which accounts for approximately 69 percent of *kava* exported from Fiji, has witnessed the increase in demand for Fiji *kava* that had exceeded tenfold from 2013 to 2023. This growth is indicated by a rise of export value from FJ\$2.6 million dollars in 2013 to FJ\$26.2 million in 2023.

It is important to note that this a demand from merely 8 percent of the adult population in the United States, as indicated by the Kava Coalition Insight Report. This underlines the significant potential for market expansion, as awareness and interest in *kava* continues to grow in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, considering the United States' influence of the *kava* industry in Fiji, the mission has set a robust scoping plan in the following areas:

- (1) Explore various market chains covering the U.S. market;
- (2) Get first-hand information on the development around *kava* space;
- (3) To understand *kava* Import Regulations and Import Processes in the US;
- (4) To understand the status of *kava* extract and its uses in the US market;
- (5) To access the *kava* market outlets and demand in the US; and
- (6) To experience the research and development work in the *kava* industry in the US.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the *kava* market in the United States is grouped into two primary segments - the Pacific Island Diaspora Market and the Western Consumer Market. Over three quarter of United States population remains unaware of *kava* and its multitude of benefits. This gap in awareness represents an enormous opportunity of benefits. This gap in awareness represents an enormous opportunity for the *kava* industry to expand its presence and influence in American markets.

The diversification of *kava* products in the United States is advancing rapidly. We are witnessing a shift from traditional *kava* products, such as ‘waka’ and ‘lewena,’ to innovative *kava* extracts. This transformation is being driven by robust marketing strategies, particularly through digital platforms and the establishment of modern *kava* bars.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform this august House and our *kava* farmers who are listening today about the evolving landscape of *kava* in the United States. I would like to emphasise two significant types of *kava* extracts - green *kava* juice extract and CO₂ (carbon dioxide) based extracts. The CO₂ extracts are highly potent and are being utilised to create *kava* shots, as well as a variety of *kava*-infused products like gummies and candy, and in numerous beverages. The market for *kava* extracts is not only large, but it is also expanding at a rapid pace.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the scoping mission has yielded valuable insights and fostered collaborative partnerships, particularly with the Kava Coalition. Our discussions have focussed on advancing *kava* standards, conducting consumer market research on *kava* in the United States initiating pre-clinical trials and exploring market access opportunities for Europe and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in aligning with the Food and Drug Administration regulations and other import standards, compliance is essential for fostering market expansion. Quality control and need for safe, clean *kava* are critical factors that must be addressed to tap into potential markets in the United States. Therefore, it is vital to establish and enforce a robust Kava Bill that guarantees the export of only food-safe and clean *kava*.

To meet the growing demand for *kava* in the U.S market, it is essential to enhance existing facilities and establish new, compliant and modern infrastructure throughout the *kava* value-chain. Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the predominant market outlets for *kava* in the United States is the *kava* bars, with other 400 establishments in operation. *Kava* in *kava* bars is not only mixed with water, but also with various flavoured beverages.

In St. Petersburg, we had the privilege of attending the 11th Anniversary Celebration of a *kava* bar known as the Low Tide Kava Bar. The *kava* bar was jam-packed with regular patrons, all of whom were Americans and no Pacific Islanders. It is interesting to note that discussions with consumers revealed that *kava* has been consumed as an alternative to drugs and alcohol, demonstrating its beneficial impact on individuals.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have also established a valuable partnership with America *kava*, a leading group dedicated to the promotion and cultivation of *kava* in the United States. Their expertise in *kava* research and development is impressive, and they are excited to collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways to enhance our own research and development efforts regarding *kava*. In Fiji, we face significant challenges such as *kava* dieback, brood-knot nematode, and pests that threatens our *Kava* Industry.

However, the potential for tissue-culturing disease-free *kava* plants presents a transformative opportunity. To expand our *kava* industry, we must explore innovative solutions that empowers our farmers to increase their *kava* yields and minimise losses. The Ministry is passionate about reinforcing the connection we have established in the United States of America as we work together

to tackle the challenges facing kava cultivation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to express the gratitude of the United States of America *kava* community towards our dedicated *kava* producers in Fiji. It is evident that without hard work of our *kava* farmers, *Kava* would not exist, nor would we have the privilege of exporting it to the United States of America. To our dedicated *kava* farmers in Fiji, thank you and thank you for your hard work, your valuable contribution to the Fiji's economy and to putting Fiji on the map of the United States of America's market.

Furthermore, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the individuals, businesses, and organisations in the United States of America that generously shared their time and resources with the Fijian delegation. Your willingness to welcome us into your facilities, shops, retail outlets, and *kava* bars have been immensely appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as the outcome of the mission, the delegation discussed in-depth details regarding the way forward to our *Kava* Industry and in very broad areas including production side, processing and exporters, marketing, and having *kava* forums close stakeholder network.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a lot of hard work ahead to grow the Kava Industry, but one thing is clear, the opportunity is huge. We must get this right. With those words, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity to deliver my End of the Week Statement.

HON. V.T.T. K. RAYALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I begin by extending my heartfelt congratulations to the Honourable Assistant Minister and his delegation for their successful mission to the United States of America. Their dedication has opened doors for our *Kava* Industry, doors that lead to growth, innovation, and global recognition. To our partners in the United States of America who supported this mission, *vinaka vakalevu*. Your collaboration strengthens the bridge between Fiji and the world.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, kava is not just a crop. It is the lifeblood of our agricultural economy, a cultural emblem and a billion-dollar industry that sustains thousands of rural farmers. Today, I reaffirm our unwavering commitment to elevating this vital industry. Together we are not merely growing kava, we are cultivating a legacy.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the foundation of any thriving industry is its production. We are taking bold, decisive steps to ensure that Fijian kava remains synonymous with quality and consistency. We are launching a research on *Kava* Programme to revolutionise large-scale commercial farming. In key *kava* growing regions, modern wash bays will soon be constructed to enhance processing standards. Through the introduction of advance technologies and best practices in crop management, we are boosting productivity and empowering farmers. Most importantly, we are actively engaging our youth, ensuring that the next generation carries this industry forward with pride and innovation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not just about planting crops. It is about planting opportunities for our farmers, our families and our future. Mr. Speaker, sir, for Fiji's *kava* to thrive on the global stage, it must meet the highest processing and export standards. The *Kava* Bill, developed in partnership with the Ministry of Trade, is nearing completion. This legislation will ensure that our *kava* meets international regulatory requirements, including those of the US FDA, by setting standard quality benchmarks we are not just ensuring compliance but establishing Fiji as the gold standard in *kava* production.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not test about meeting expectations. It is about exceeding them. It is about ensuring that every ship of Fijian *kava* carries a promise of safety, quality and excellence.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the globe appetite for kava is growing, and Fiji is ready to meet the demand. We are working hand-in-hand with exporters, processors and industry stakeholders to align with both local and international market standards. Through partnerships with U.S. importers and trade commissions, we are promoting Fijian grown kava as a premium product worldwide.

In the United States, kava has become more than a traditional beverage. It is now a sort of ingredient in the manufacturing sector, particularly in the production of natural health supplements and relaxation products. *Kava's* unique calming properties have positioned it as a key component in stress relief capsules, herbal teas and wellness beverages. These products are in high demand as the U.S. market continues to prioritise health and wellness.

By tapping into this growing market, we are not just exporting kava, we are exporting Fijian innovation and quality. Beyond the U.S. we are exploring new markets, ensuring that Fijian *kava* becomes a global brand, recognised for its quality and cultural significance. Mr. Speaker, Sir, our kava is more than a drink. It is a symbol of Fijian heritage, resilience and craftsmanship.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, later this year, Fiji will host the Fiji Islands *Kava* Forum, a landmark event that will showcase our leadership in the global *kava* industry. This forum will bring together international stakeholders, including VIPs from the U.S. and other key markets. It will serve as a platform for dialogue, collaboration and innovation. Discussions will centre on the *Kava* Bill, export challenges and opportunities for growth. But this forum is more than just a meeting. It is a declaration that Fiji is ready to lead.

It is a statement that our agricultural resources, from kava to dalo and coconut are second to none. The forum is not just about kava. It is about positioning Fiji as a hub of agricultural excellence attracting investment and creating opportunities for our farmers. Mr. Speaker, Sir, our commitment to the *kava* industry does not end with forums or legislation. We are laying the groundwork for lasting success through a comprehensive kava industry policy. This policy will be guided by insights from the Yaqona Farming Household Census, ensuring data-driven inclusive and sustainable strategies.

It will prioritise the needs of farmers, exporters and consumers, while safeguarding the environment. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not just a policy, it is a promise. A promise to the Fijian people that the *kava* industry will continue to grow, thrive, and benefit generations to come. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the road ahead is not without challenges. But the opportunities, as stated by my Assistant Minister, are far greater.

We are building an industry that empowers our farmers, uplifts our youth, and strengthens our economy. We are creating a future where Fijian *kava* is celebrated not just as a product but as a global brand of excellence. And we are ensuring that this billion-dollar industry continues to be a source of pride and prosperity for all Fijians. Mr. Speaker, Sir, kava is more than a crop. It is a symbol of our resilience, our culture and our potential. It reminds us that together we can achieve greatness. It is a testament to the strength of the Fijian people, and a promise of a brighter future. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER.- I thank the Honourable Minister for his response. The last of the End of the Week Statements will be delivered by the Honourable Fayaz Koya. I give the honourable Member the floor.

Fiji a Modern Nation State

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, honourable Members of Parliament, fellow Fijians, I rise today as a servant of the people and as someone who firmly believes in the principles of good

governance, economic stability, national unity, law and order and all those things that are a cornerstone of a modern nation State.

Mr. Speaker, but I also stand before you very concerned because the ship that was once steady, growing and resilient has actually being thrown off course. You can classify us from before as some country that was heading towards a modern nation state or was a modern State already, now it would seem to me that there is a determination to dismantle the years of progress without any clear roadmap going forward.

(Honourable Members interject)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

Will you honourable Members give the opportunity for honourable Koya to deliver his statement?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Sir. All of these, Mr. Speaker, is actually disastrous. I speak on behalf of a large number of the Fijian population who actually expect and deserve a strong and they also deserve competent government; a government that delivers progress and a government that is not full of empty rhetoric.

However, Mr. Speaker, let me qualify it. We are not here as obstructionists - quite the opposite. We are here as a guide, it is like a GPS navigating our nation back on to the right path. You can pour scorn all you want, but the truth is the truth. Let us not forget Mr. Speaker, under the previous government (FijiFirst Government), the policies were clear.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- Hear, hear!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- They were decisive, they were forward-thinking. We transformed Fiji into a modern, resilient and a thriving economy. That thriving economy, Mr. Speaker, the proof is in the pudding. We prioritised infrastructure. We built roads, we upgraded hospitals, we invested in education.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- It is your job.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- We ensured that Fijians regardless of background had opportunities to succeed, Mr. Speaker. The record speaks for itself. All of this led to the creation of a modern nation state. We grew the economy, Mr. Speaker, year-on-year. We created jobs, we attracted investments, we ensured free education for all children because we believe that no Fijian child should be left behind. We actually strengthened our healthcare system to the best of our ability.

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

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Ensuring access to better medical care. There are things that you have to fix, just like any government. We built a business-friendly environment.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I wish he would stop.

MR. SPEAKER.- Proceed, honourable Member.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, we gave Fijians the confidence to invest, we gave the Fijians the confidence to innovate and grow their businesses. We gave you the fifth fastest growing economy in the world and that is not us telling you, that is the world telling you. Let us not forget, Mr. Speaker, FijiFirst built that modern nation state. One that was inclusive, forward-thinking and grounded, I might add, in a strong economy with staunch judicial foundations.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- You are a dictatorship.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I will answer your dictatorship point once and for all. Three elections – two of which were voted in; that is not dictatorship, honourable Minister. We took Fiji from uncertainty to prosperity.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Hear, hear!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the third election, along came this current Government, in by vote, might I add, like the honourable Prime Minister always points out, but instead of building on these strong foundations, move on, forget about the past, build on what you get.

(Honourable Government Members interject)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- Move on.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Very way we give respect to this honourable Prime Minister, you ought to realise, who you used to respect. As a result, today, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we created strong foundations, but they have spent the past two years reversing progress, creating uncertainty, and destabilising key areas of the economy. As a result, we see policies based on indecisiveness, confusion, quite frankly, a lack of understanding. We see a government without a plan.

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

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Instead of a Government that provides stability and clear direction, what do we see? We see inconsistency, knee-jerk reactions and decision-making and a lack of long-term vision. Policies are announced, and then suddenly reversed, investments are promised, then abandoned. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is not positive governance. This, in a very simple English, is confusion.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- You are confused.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, FijiFirst Government understood that Fiji needed extremely careful strategic benefit. We did not govern based on guesswork. Today, we see businesses pulling back. By his own news article, the honourable Minister for Trade mentioned about another investment that was pulled back.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Did you read it properly?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Yes, I did, Mr. Speaker, Sir. This is all due to lack of confidence. Infrastructure projects are stalling, our economy is slowing down, and we are burdening the people. The Government talks about helping ordinary Fijians, yet the cost of living has skyrocketed under their watch. They promised relief but have increased financial burdens on families. Mr. Speaker,

Sir, the poor economic management has led to rising prices, while the tax policies discourage investment.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Nonsense.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- The only prosperity, honourable Prime Minister is that, your Minister for Finance has delivered badly increasing Corporate Taxes and Trial and Error Policy. Everyone remembers the Manufacturing Tax that was quickly withdrawn. Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me take you back in history also.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Complete joke.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- This is not a joke. That is the hard cold truth, honourable Minister for Finance.

History teaches us valuable lesson. Fiji got Independence in 1970, that was 17 years we moved forward, and we came to a thundering halt in 1987. Years that followed were tumultuous, we saw instability, economic decline and all of those breakdowns in between....

(Honourable Government Members interject)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Included all of that.

All of those economic breakdowns until we got to 2014. This is when the ship was steadied, Mr. Speaker, Sir. We witnessed phenomenal growth. The economy flourished, investment increased and Fiji was recognised on the global stage. As I said earlier, let me remind you, under the leadership of the former Prime Minister Bainimarama, ...

(Honourable Government Members interject)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- ... Fiji was the fifth fastest growing economy in the world.

(Honourable Government Members interject)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Today, we get comments in the paper.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, just few days ago, and *The Fiji Times* reported as saying and I quote: “The 2013 Constitution will result in a diabolical disaster.”

Mr. Speake, let me remind you, that he sits here on the basis of that Constitution. Let me remind him that he has gone through three elections, free and fair elections and he still sits there on the basis of that. He swore an oath on that. Let me also remind him of a legal perspective.

(Honourable Government Members interject)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Let me remind him, there is a principle in the law, and that principle is acquiescence. You acquiesced already by sitting here for almost 12 years.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Nonsense!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- You also might be included in that particular principle that says about lessees where you are guilty of actually just accepting it in any event. You have been here for almost 12 years. Move on, move on.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Stop creating the fear and saying there is going to be a diabolical disaster because there is no diabolical disaster.

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. F.S. KOYA.- There is absolutely diabolical anything. The only thing diabolical is that statement that you made about there is going to be a diabolical disaster if we continue with the 2013 Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, just in closing, what I really want to say is, it is not too late. It is not too late, honourable Prime Minister. We can still be the modern nation State that we want to. I am not here to criticise, but all we need to do is correct the course, accept what has happened in the past, just like you have, Sir; accept it, what we can do is stop the reckless economic mismanagement, ensure national unity, invest in long-term development. This requires strong leadership.

As an Opposition, Mr. Speaker, we are not here to hinder, but to guide. If the Government is willing correct its course, we will support the good policy but if they continue to stray, we will not hesitate to call them out. Fiji deserves better, Sir, we stand ready to ensure that we return to the path of prosperity because we all want to be a part and a parcel of a modern nation State.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a modern nation State. I have been informed that it is a political entity characterised by defined territory, a permanent population, a government and the capacity to engage in relation with other States. What distinguishes a modern nation State from earlier forms of political organisation is the alignment of nations, that is, a group of people with a shared identity based on culture, language, ethnicity or history and State which is the political and legal authority with sovereignty over a defined area. The key characteristics of a modern nation State is sovereignty. The State has supreme authority over its territory and the ability to govern itself without external interference.

As a defined territory, a nation State has clear and internationally recognised borders. A permanent population is a stable population that identifies with a nation. A government that is a political and legal system that creates and enforces laws, provides services and manages resources. Monopoly and the use of force, the state controls the military and police, maintaining order, and defending against external threats. National identity, citizens share a sense of belonging based on common language, culture, history, or ethnicity.

Diplomatic recognition, other States recognise the nation State as a legitimate political entity capable of engaging in international relations. Origins and development, the modern nation State emerged in Europe after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which established the principles of State sovereignty and non-interference. Nationalism in the 18th and 19th centuries strengthened the idea that political legitimacy comes from the will of the people rather than monarchs or religious

authorities.

The concept expanded globally during decolonisation in the 20th century, particularly after the Second World War, as former colonies established themselves as independent nation States. Examples of modern nation States, Mr. Speaker, Sir, France, a centralised government, a common language, French, a strong national identity. Japan, a homogeneous culture, defined territory and a stable government. The United States of America, a diverse population unified by shared values of democracy and constitutional law.

Challenges to a modern State, Mr. Speaker, Sir, globalisation, economic and political interdependence can limit State sovereignty. Multinational states, states with multiple ethnic or cultural groups, for example, Canada, India, face challenges in maintaining national unity. Non-state actors, terrorism, multinational corporations and international organisations can influence state power. The modern nation State remains the dominant political unit and international organisations can influence State power. The modern nation State remains a dominant political unit in international relations, but it is constantly adapting to internal and external pressures.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if the 2013 Constitution is the, honourable Koya's definition of modern State then it sounds more like a State that is ruled by those who no longer here with us, are not in the House, and are still listening what they in place for us. With the voice of the majority, especially the indigenous people of this land, are not heard. The Coalition Government was voted into office because the people wanted change.

The change starts with the Constitution, the system that dictates everything about this land, the way people are ruled and required to live their lives. It is quite amazing that the so-called learned people talk of the narrative free societies, prosperity, good governance and ethics, yet protect a constitution, a system that was forced on the people of this land for the interest of a few. This is not the country that our forefathers desired and built through the teachings of Christ to extend kindness, love and mercy to all. Through that, they are giving away is now being seen as giving away. Worse, it is seen as a weakness and have been clawed away through the laws that were forced on them. This is no foundation to build tolerance and peaceful coexistence, let alone growth, prosperity and goodwill.

The Coalition Government is for the people, their dignity and well-being, where security issues are essentially integrity issues. The very reason the Government is committed to changing the system, the Constitution for the people are to be heard and their voices are our mandate. They spoke up in 2022 elections and this is what the Coalition Government is doing. Let us cast our minds back to the day when the election result went up. Celebrations around Fiji, particularly Suva, it was about freedom. For 16 years, they were dictated, Mr. Speaker.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hogwash!

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- We gave the people their integrity and dignity by giving them their voices and they have spoken. Now they are being silenced on the floor of Parliament, the very faith that His Excellency the President and the people refer to as the House of Hope.

Mr. Speaker, many countries around the world are experiencing internal turmoil because they were not allowed time and space to transition. We are transitioning. For the people to be part of the solution, the lessons are staring us in the face. Forcing a constitution on our people is doing exactly the opposite.

Our internal relations, Mr. Speaker, Sir, accords us that stability and growth comes from within ourselves, and I mentioned the other day, the word, 'autochthonous'. It must come from us. By making space for each other, talking to each other, building together, journeying together, knowing that our strength is in ensuring that we acknowledge, we share and value each other, no matter how small a group or community is. A State under God, where justice, love and mercy flow like a stream, this is the modern State that we see in Fiji today. Without a constitution, it cannot be a fully modern state. I mean, without a change in our Constitution.

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I wish to add, there is an addendum to the Communication from the Speaker and that is in respect of the status of honourable Shalen Kumar. Honourable Members, please kindly note that I have received official notification from honourable Shalen Kumar of his status. He has withdrawn his support to the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Group of 16 Bloc.

Honourable Shalen Kumar has further informed the Speaker's Office that he shall remain as an Independent for the remainder of this parliamentary term and that he will support the group that is presently being led by the honourable Ioane Naivalurua.

Subsequent to my communication earlier today, I now recognise the Group of 15 under the leadership of the honourable Inia Seruiratu and the Group of 11 under the leadership of the honourable Ioane Naivalurua.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That Parliament adjourns until Monday, 28th April, 2025 at 9.30 a.m.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that concludes the end of our sitting for this week. I must thank you all for the robust debates and contributions throughout the week. As always, it continues to be an honour and a privilege to preside over your deliberation in the last two weeks of the sitting of Parliament. I remain humble with confidence, you, honourable Prime Minister and honourable Members of this august body have bestowed on me to serve you and to continue to serve our people.

I now declare Parliament adjourned until Monday, 28th April, 2025, at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.49 p.m.

ANNEXURE I

**Reply to Written Question No. 06/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education
(Ref. Page 578-579)**



**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. A.M. Radrodro)**

Reply to Question No. 06/2025 asked by honourable H. Chand is as follows:

(a)

| Division | District | Total |
|----------|---------------------|--------|
| Central | Suva | 148 |
| | Nausori | |
| Western | Lautoka/Nadi/Yasawa | 11,898 |
| | Ba/Tavua | |
| | Ra | |
| | Nadroga/Navosa | |
| Northern | Cakaudrove | 8,538 |

(b)

| Division | District | Transportation | Classroom | Teacher Availability | Student Related Issues | Any Other Complaints | Total No. of Issues | Govt. Toll Free | Teacher Helpline | Total |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| Central | Suva | 4 | 3 | 2 | 23 | 4 | 36 | 6 | 90 | 148 |
| | Nausori | 3 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 16 | | | |
| Western | Lautoka/Nadi/Yasawa | 10,245 | 5 | 10 | 1,392 | 3 | 11,655 | 10 | 75 | 11,898 |
| | Ba/Tavua | 91 | 0 | 15 | 7 | 0 | 113 | | | |
| | Ra | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 13 | | | |
| | Nadroga/Navosa | 15 | 1 | 15 | 0 | 1 | 32 | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Northern | Cakaudrove | 8,251 | 5 | 41 | 0 | 3 | 8,300 | 3 | 65 | 8,538 |
| | Macuata/Bua | 160 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 170 | | | |
| Eastern | | 5 | 0 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 40 | 0 | 39 | 79 |
| Total | | 10,527 | 13 | 79 | 1,438 | 18 | | 19 | 269 | 20,663 |

The Way Forward

1. Monitoring and Record Keeping

The Ministry will ensure that customer complaints query books are closely monitored across the nine districts. All officers will be trained on a standardized format for documenting queries and complaints in the register books to maintain consistency. This will help avoid missing or incomplete records and ensure a clear process is followed.

2. Timeliness and Follow-up

The Ministry will establish clear timelines for responding to all queries, with a maximum response time of 5 working days. Follow-up will be conducted to ensure resolution and to gather customer feedback on service quality.

3. Centralized Monitoring and Reporting

A central monitoring team will be appointed to oversee the accurate recording of complaints and queries at each district. Monthly summary reports will be compiled and forwarded to the Ministry of Education

Headquarters for review.

4. Accountability and Performance Reporting

Clear accountability will be assigned to officers in each district, with quarterly reports generated outlining issues raised, resolutions provided, and customer satisfaction feedback. These reports will be reviewed to ensure transparency and consistent service delivery.

ANNEXURE II

**Reply to Written Question No. 07/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Justice
(Ref. Page 579)**



**MINISTER FOR JUSTICE
(Hon. S.D. Turaga)**

Reply to Question No. 07/2025 asked by honourable K.K. Lal is as follows:

- (1) The total number of complaints received across the four legal registries, including the administration of the Justice of Peace, under the Ministry of Justice, for the year 2024 from January to December are as follows:

| Department/Registries | Total Complaints Received | General Public | Private Sector |
|---|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Registrar of Titles Office | 51 | 21 | 30 |
| Registrar Generals Office (Births, Deaths and Marriages – BDM) | 35 | 33 | 2 |
| Registrar of Companies Office | 30 | 19 | 11 |
| Office of the Official Receiver | 10 | 3 | 7 |
| Justice of the Peace (JP) Corporate Services Division | 5 | 5 | Nil |
| Total | 131 | 81 | 50 |

- (2) On summary of the nature of complaints received, the key issues raised by complainants is tabulated below:

| Complaints | Issues |
|---|---|
| Delays in Process and Registrations | Customers faced longer waiting hours for registration services |
| Inquiries Process | Quite a number of complaints are only for basic inquiries on registration process, family relative search, title search and business applications process and requirements, et cetera. |
| System Downtime | Frequent technical issues affected the delivery service, particularly with the e-ROC and e-BDM Systems. |
| Change of Names | Change of names of spouse from their maiden name back to their marriage name, a change that was initiated by the previous administration which has put a lot of burden to the general public, especially married women. |
| Limited information and awareness on basic requirements for registrations | Many clients and customers are unaware of the necessary requirements and documentations. |
| Inaccessibility of e-profile and ROC Systems (Digital Fiji) | Customers facing difficulties accessing online services, limiting their ability to process applications remotely. |
| Delays in receiving Titles and Deeds search request. | Customers often complain about the turnover time in receiving their lodgements request from the Titles Office, transferring documents and searching for Titles request. |
| Unprofessional behaviour of some of the serving Justice of Peace | Complaints from the general public in regard to some of the serving JP's behaviour which is unprofessional and unbecoming of the office in which they are serving. |

Conclusion: The honourable Member may request additional information and/or solutions that have been provided to address the complaints.

ANNEXURE III

**Reply to Written Question No. 08/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Immigration
(Ref. Page 579)**

**MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION
(Hon. V. Naupoto)**

Reply to Question No. 08/2025 asked by honourable J.N. Nand is as follows:

- (a) The total number of work permits issued during the period from August 2023 to January 2025 includes all categories of permits granted to foreign nationals for employment in Fiji. This figure encompasses both, short-term and long-term work permits across various sectors, reflecting the demand for skilled and unskilled labour in the country. The data provides insight into workforce trends, employer needs, and the effectiveness of immigration policies in facilitating employment while maintaining regulatory compliance.

A total of 7,581 work permits were issued between August 2023 to January 2025. The breakdown of those permits by year are detailed in the table below.

| Year | Total Number Issued |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 2023 | 1,641 |
| 2024 | 4,819 |
| 2025 | 1,121 |
| Total | 7,581 |

- (b) On the breakdown of work permits issued for the public and private sectors, the system is not designed to differentiate between work permits issued for the two sectors, as it operates based on predefined settings. However, it does allow us to verify the number of registered employers registered within the system.

(i) **Employer registration by organisation type**

| Organisation Type | Total Registered |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Charitable | 20 |
| Company limited by guarantee | 74 |
| Foreign company | 58 |
| Government organisation | 13 |
| International organisation | 15 |
| Local private | 444 |
| Non-Profit Organisation | 14 |
| Partnership | 26 |
| Public | 20 |
| Regional | 02 |
| Religious | 31 |
| Sole Trader | 56 |
| Statutory Body | 01 |
| Total | 774 |

(ii) **Employer registration by industry type**

| Organisation Type | Total Registered |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Agriculture | 28 |

| | |
|-----------------|------------|
| Construction | 155 |
| Food & Beverage | 52 |
| IT & Technology | 16 |
| Manufacturing | 80 |
| Mining | 10 |
| Others | 202 |
| Retail | 56 |
| Service | 94 |
| Tourism | 81 |
| Total | 774 |

- (c) On the average processing time for work permit applications, since the implementation of the Document Management System (DMS) in September 2024, the standard maximum turnaround time is 21 working days, provided all required documents are in order.

However, processing timelines may be extended due to various factors, including case complexity, incomplete applications, non-compliance with immigration procedures, delay in submitting required documents and system downtime.

ANNEXURE IV

Reply to Written Question No. 09/2025 tabled by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics (Ref. Page 579-580)



**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR FINANCE, STRATEGIC
PLANNING, NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STATISTICS
(Hon. Professor B.C. Prasad)**

Reply to Question No. 09/2025 by honourable J. Usamate is as follows:

The information requested for the period January 2023 to January 2025 falls into three financial years – 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. Hence, the information provided is reflected under those financial years.

- (a) Between January 2023 and January 2025, the total cost of hiring government advisors amounts to \$740,548. The cost of advisors funded by donors or development partners remains unknown, as those details are not disclosed to the line agencies.
- (b) The breakdown of costs categorised by Ministries is attached as Annex 1.
- (c) Tabulated below are the advisors engaged by Government through Government funding and through development partners:

| Year | Government Advisors | Development Partners/Donors |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2022-2023 | 8 | 12 |
| 2023-2024 | 2 | 13 |
| 2024-2025 | 2 | 16 |
| Total | 12 | 41 |

The detailed breakdown by Ministries is also reflected in Annex 1.

Annex 1

| Head | Ministries and Departments | Government Advisors | | | | | | Development Partners | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|---|
| | | 2022-2023 (1 st January 2023 – 31 st July 2023) | Govt. Funding (\$) | 2023-2024 (1 st January 2023 – 31 st July 2023) | Govt. Funding (\$) | 2024-2025 (1 st January 2023 – 31 st July 2023) | Govt. Funding (\$) | 2022-2023 (1 st January 2023 – 31 st July 2023) | Govt. Funding (\$) | 2023-2024 (1 st January 2023 – 31 st July 2023) | Govt. Funding (\$) | 2024-2025 (1 st January 2023 – 31 st July 2023) | Govt. Funding (\$) |
| 1 | Office of the President | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | Office of the Prime Minister | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | Office of the Attorney-General | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4 | Ministry of Finance | - | - | 2 | 270,000 | 2 | 270,000 | 6 | Technical Assistance by PFTAC, ADB and DFAT | 7 | Technical Assistance by World Bank, ADB and DFAT | 7 | Technical Assistance by World Bank, ADB and DFAT |
| 5 | Ministry of iTaukei Affairs | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6 | Ministry of Defence, National Security and Policing | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 8 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10 | Ministry of Environment and Climate Change | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 14 | Fiji Corrections Service | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15 | Ministry of Justice | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 16 | Ministry of Communications | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 17 | Ministry of Civil Service & Public Enterprises | 8 | 200,548 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 18 | Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management | - | - | - | - | - | - | 3 | Funded by JICA, UN Women and USAID | 3 | Funded by JICA, UN Women and USAID | 3 | Funded by JICA, UN Women and USAID |
| 19 | Republic of Fiji Military Forces | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 20 | Fiji Police Force | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 49 | Peacekeeping Operations | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 21 | Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | FEMIS Advisor funded under the Fiji Support Programme |
| 22 | Ministry of Health and Medical Services | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 23 | Ministry of Housing and Community Development | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | Funded by NZMAT | - | - | - | - |
| 24 | Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | Funded by UN Women | 3 | Funded by UN Women and UNICEF | 3 | Funded by UN Women and UNICEF |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----------|----------------|----------|----------------|----------|----------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------------|
| 25 | Ministry of Youth and Sports | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | Funded by UNICEF | - | - | - | - |
| 26 | Higher Education Commission | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 30 | Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 31 | Ministry of Fisheries | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 32 | Ministry of Forestry | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 33 | Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 34 | Ministry of Trade, SMEs and Communications | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 35 | Ministry of Sugar Industry and Multi- Ethnic Affairs | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 37 | Ministry of Local Government | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 38 | Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 2 | Funded by UNDP |
| 40 | Ministry of Infrastructure and Meteorological Services | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | Total | 8 | 200,548 | 2 | 270,000 | 2 | 270,000 | 12 | - | 13 | - | 16 | - |

ANNEXURE V

**Reply to Written Question No. 10/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Justice
(Ref. Page 580)**



**MINISTER FOR JUSTICE
(Hon. S.D. Turaga)**

Reply to Question No. 10/2025 asked by honourable F.S. Koya is as follows:

- (a) The total number of pending cases in the High Court, Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Fiji, categorised by year, is as follows:

| Year | Month | Total Number of Pending Cases | | |
|------|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | | High Court | Court of Appeal | Supreme Court of Fiji |
| 2023 | January to December | 3,740 | 747 | 134 |
| 2024 | January to December | 3,606 | 601 | 69 |
| 2025 | January | 2,819 | 689 | 105 |

- (b) The breakdown of pending cases by type (civil, criminal or other categories), categorised by year, is as follows:

(i) **Supreme Court and Court of Appeal – Summary of Pending Cases**

| Name of Court | Case Type | 2023 [January-December] | 2023 [January-December] | 2023 [January-December] |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Supreme Court | Criminal | 102 | 47 | 73 |
| | Civil | 32 | 22 | 32 |
| | Total | 134 | 69 | 105 |
| Court of Appeal | Criminal | 509 | 388 | 439 |
| | Civil | 238 | 213 | 250 |
| | Total | 747 | 601 | 689 |

(ii) **High Court – Summary of Pending Cases**

| Case Type | 2023 [January to December] | | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| | Suva | Lautoka | Labasa | National Total |
| Criminal | 356 | 103 | 355 | 814 |
| Civil | 1,814 | 168 | 944 | 2,926 |
| Total | 2,170 | 271 | 1,299 | 3,740 |
| Case Type | 2024 [January to December] | | | |
| | Suva | Lautoka | Labasa | National Total |
| Criminal | 300 | 105 | 267 | 672 |
| Civil | 1,573 | 174 | 1,187 | 2,934 |
| Total | 1,873 | 279 | 1,454 | 3,606 |
| Case Type | 2025 [January] | | | |
| | Suva | Lautoka | Labasa | National Total |
| Criminal | 336 | 287 | 113 | 736 |
| Civil | 697 | 1,207 | 179 | 2,083 |
| Total | 1,033 | 1,494 | 292 | 2,819 |

Additionally, at this juncture, we cannot provide a detailed breakdown of the pending cases by type. The Ministry of Justice is working closely with the Chief Registrar to obtain the breakdown.

- (c) The Chief Registrar, under the guidance of the Chief Justice, in the last 24 months, have implemented a system that has worked on the principle as outlined in Section 15(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji as quoted below:

“Every person charged with an offence and every party to a civil dispute has the right to have the case determined within a reasonable time.”

ANNEXURE VI

**Reply to Written Question No. 13/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education
(Ref. Page 581)**


**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. A.M. Radrodro)**

Reply to Question No. 13/2025 asked by honourable R.R. Sharma is as follows:

The External Review Committee (ERC) is a body established by the Higher Education Commission, under the Higher Education Act 2008, tasked with reviewing universities in Fiji and assessing the quality of their programmes against Quality Assurance Standards. Its primary objectives include:

- evaluating the overall quality of education and research;
- governance and administration effectiveness;
- academic and support services; and
- providing recommendations to improve the standards and overall quality of our institutions.

The Commission appointed five members to ERC on 30th May, 2024, after being re-advertised in March 2024. On Friday, 24th May, 2024, I assured this august House that upon the conclusion of the stakeholder consultations, the ERC will meticulously synthesize the gathered insights into a comprehensive report which would be finalised by 30th October, 2024. To date, the ERC has completed its initial report, which has highlighted several findings. However, some areas in the report remain ambiguous and require further clarification.

There has been a degree of disagreement amongst the ERC members regarding some of the recommendations given, questioning the integrity of certain findings. This has led to concerns about the objectivity of the review process. To address those issues and ensure a thorough and impartial evaluation, an independent consultant will be engaged to audit the review process, including financial management and decision-making, to ensure fairness and accountability.

The final report, which will address the grey areas and incorporate the audit findings, is expected to be ready by May 2025. Once finalised, the report will be shared with relevant stakeholders, including Parliament, to ensure transparency and informed decision-making moving forward.

ANNEXURE VII

Reply to Written Question No. 14/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry (Ref. Page 581-582)


MINISTER FOR MULTI-ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND SUGAR INDUSTRY
(Hon. C.J. Singh)

Reply to Question No. 08/2025 asked by honourable A.A. Maharaj is as follows:

I thank honourable Maharaj for his question as it gives me the opportunity to give proper context to overseas travels of Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) Chairman. It is important to understand that these travels have been necessitated by the seriously collapsing state of FSC and the urgency to find solutions.

The sugar industry remains a vital pillar of our economy, and the FSC plays a crucial role in ensuring its sustainability and growth. In this regard, strategic international engagement is necessary to foster industry partnerships, explore advancements in sugar production, and secure opportunities for the sector's future. This is especially so now, given the seriously parlous and crippling state of FSC and the industry. The Chairman and his Board members, who are amongst the lowest paid in the country, have been handed a completely run-down infrastructure of ageing mill machinery, plant, buildings, and transport network, almost 90 percent of them are more than 100 years old.

We must not forget that the FSC Board Directors are responsible for the largest public sector organisation in the country, and their oversight has a direct bearing on the livelihoods of thousands of our citizens. It is an established fact that FSC has not engaged in any level of commercially accepted principles of prudent plant maintenance, replacement and investment in new plant and machinery despite providing millions as depreciation expenses. All those years of sustained neglect, lack of proper oversight, incompetence, corruption and wastages have now brought it down to its knees, gravely threatening its viability. We must not forget that one single STM project alone cost the industry nearly \$800 million in losses.

Let me also put on record that the Chairman has been handed a poisoned chalice in having to secure a turnaround with a debt of nearly \$400 million. In the next five years, FSC requires an additional \$500 million for urgent capital and maintenance purposes. FSC is facing multiple lawsuits, one alone of \$31 million, executed for a completely one sided and reckless contract for a mere \$20,000 annual return.

Let me also state that in the current Chairman, I have a person whose knowledge and skills are unmatched, and it will be petty for anyone to judge his competence and contributions on the basis of his travels. The fact is that FSC's revival and global competitiveness depends entirely on sourcing new technology, major upgradation of plant machinery, transport infrastructure, significantly enhanced efficiencies and diversification. The industry cannot survive without sharing the skills, knowledge and experiences of our global sugar producing countries. And this is the primary and only reason for the travels.

May I also point out that his annual allowance of \$12,500 per year pales into breathtaking insignificance in comparison to the million-dollar remuneration of the previous chairman, most notably one Abdul Khan. The two previous CEOs, Graham Clark and Abdul Khan, were both on a million-dollar packages. In comparison, the combined salaries and allowances of both the current Chairman and CEO is less than \$350,000, annually.

Even more disturbing is the proliferation of corruption and wastages that happened under the previous Bainimarama Government. Abdul Khan collected nearly \$800,000 in payments, deposited directly in seven lots of USD50,000 each into his Westpac Bank account in Wellington, New Zealand, while in the employment with FSC. Added to that was his conflict of interest arising from his private company doing business with FSC, which were not properly disclosed.

I want to clearly highlight that all overseas travels were personally approved by me as the Minister, and the Chairman ensures that only the bare minimum number travel outside. All reports are submitted he chooses to travel in economy as far as practicable. Indeed, his return trip to Brazil of some 30 hours was economy unlike the lavish indulgences of the previous government Ministers, Chairman and officials.

- (a) Since his appointment, the Chairman of the FSC, Mr. Nitya Reddy, has undertaken a total of five official overseas travel engagements, all of which were strategically aligned with the broader objectives of industry development and stakeholder collaboration.

Let me clarify that Mr. Reddy is employed full time as a senior finance executive and his engagement as the Chairman is an expression of his commitment to our industry, being a cane farmer's son and a former senior Accountant of the FSC. Unlike the previous FSC administrators, he is not driven by any baubles of office or financial gains. As the Minister of Sugar Industry, I could not have found a more capable person to be the Chairman of FSC.

The details of the five visits are as follows:

- (i) 1st Trip (November 2023)
The Chairman attended International Sugar Organization (ISO) Conference in London, a globally recognised forum where key sugar-producing countries and other industry experts convene to discuss market trends, regulatory developments, and industry strategies.
- (ii) 2nd Trip (March-April 2024)
The Chairman travelled to China to visit a sugar mill that the Government of Fiji was considering as a replacement mill for Rakiraki.
- (iii) 3rd Trip (August 2024)
The Chairman accompanied me and other Ministry Officials to Brazil to engage with one of the world's largest sugar producers. The discussions focused on best practices in sugar cane farming, ethanol production models, and farmer incentives.
- (iv) 4th Trip (September 2024)
A delegation led by me and my former Permanent Secretary, the FSC Chairman and the CEO of FSC, travelled to Townsville, Australia, to meet the officials of Wilmar Sugars and to discuss opportunities for collaboration, market access, and sustainable sugar farming partnerships.
- (v) 5th Trip (November 2024)
The Chairman attended the ISO Conference in London, further strengthening Fiji's representation in international sugar industry discussions and ensuring Fiji's interests are well-represented in global trade negotiations.

- (b) The summary of the trips are as follows:

| Month and Year | Country Visited | Purpose of Visit | Duration |
|------------------|------------------------|---|---------------------|
| November 2023 | London/Toulouse | Attended ISO Conference London | 16-29 November 2023 |
| March-April 2024 | China | Visit the new sugar mill factory | 27 April-1 May 2024 |
| August 2024 | Brazil | Trip with Minister and Sugar Industry Representatives | 11-16 August 2024 |
| September 2024 | Australia (Townsville) | Trip with Minister, PS and CEO | 9-12 September 2024 |
| November 2024 | London | Attended London ISO Conference 2024 | 20-30 November 2024 |

The total expenditure incurred for these overseas engagements, covering airfare, per diem allowances, and related expenses, amounted to \$111,046. The total expenditure incurred for those trips, inclusive of airfare, accommodation, meals, and allowances, is detailed below:

| Expense Category | Amount (FJD) |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Airfare | 84,096 |
| Per Diem Allowance | 23,391 |
| Other Expenses | 58 |
| Travel Allowance | 3,500 |
| Total Expenditure | 111,046 |

Those overseas engagements were not merely travel expenditures but rather strategic investments that will significantly contribute to the sustainability and competitiveness of Fiji's sugar industry, bringing optimism for the future. These trips are related to four of our major strategies that includes:

- (i) Strengthening Trade Partnerships Engagements with ISO, China, Brazil, and Australia aligns to our strategy of strengthening trade partnerships. The meetings with counterparts have opened discussions on new export markets and trade cooperation.
- (ii) Technology Advancement and Cost Reduction. The visit explored modernised sugar mills and cost-effective processing techniques, which can assist in improving efficiency and reducing production costs in Fiji.
- (iii) Global Market Positioning Participation in the ISO Conference (London 2023 & 2024) allowed Fiji to have a voice in key industry discussions, ensuring that our sugar exports remain competitive in the global market.
- (iv) Exploring Sugar Industry Diversification Brazil's discussions focused on ethanol production and other by-products advancements in technologies in the sugar industry, including advancements in sugar cane research, which could be a potential diversification opportunity for Fiji's sugar industry.

In the face of the ongoing challenges facing the sugar industry, it is imperative that Fiji continues to engage with international partners, leading sugar-producing countries, and key industry forums. Those engagements, as demonstrated by the Chairman's activities, will position Fiji's sugar sector for long-term growth, resilience, and sustainability.

I assure the honourable Members that the Ministry of Sugar Industry and FSC, especially under the leadership of the Chairman, will continue to pursue initiatives that benefit our farmers,

millers, and the entire sugar industry. We are committed to ensuring that Fiji remains a competitive player in the global sugar market.

Finally, the overseas travels have been an eye opener for us. I make it clear and confidently say that our sugar industry is at least 50 years behind all our contemporary sugarcane producers, millers and manufacturers in terms of technology, efficiency, diversification and sustainability. We cannot meet those challenges cocooned in our little enclave of ignorance and incompetence. We must learn and learn fast from the rest of the world. I thank the Chairman and his team for embracing those challenges.