

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

FRIDAY, 8TH AUGUST, 2025

[CORRECTED COPY]

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FRIDAY, 8TH AUGUST, 2025

The Parliament met at 9.36 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present the honourable Leader of the Opposition; the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communication; the honourable Minister for Youth and Sports; the honourable Assistant Minister for Information; honourable V. Nath; and honourable P.D. Kumar.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 7th August, 2025, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPEAKER

Welcome

A very good morning to all honourable Members who are present on this final day of sitting this week, to our guests in the gallery and those joining us via the broadcast and online platforms. Thank you for staying connected and engaged in the workings of your Parliament.

Changes to Standing Committee Membership

Honourable Members, in light of the recent developments within Cabinet during this sitting week, it has become necessary to review the membership of the Standing Committees to ensure compliance with Standing Order 114 (2). The Office of the Speaker has now received confirmation from the honourable Government Whip, and the revised Committee membership will take effect on Monday, 18th August, 2025.

In accordance with Standing Order 115(4), please, note that Government representation across all six Standing Committees are as follows:

Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights

- (1) Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure - Chairperson
- (2) Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu
- (3) Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu
- (4) Hon. Sachida Nand

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

- (1) Hon. Esrom Immanuel - Chairperson
- (2) Hon. Jovesa Vocea
- (3) Hon. Naisa Tuinaceva
- (4) Hon. Sachida Nand

Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

- (1) Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna - Chairperson
- (2) Hon. Alipate Tuicolo
- (3) Hon. Kalaveti Ravu
- (4) Hon. Shalen Kumar

Standing Committee on Social affairs

- (1) Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu - Chairperson
- (2) Hon. Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure
- (3) Hon. Alipate Tuicolo
- (4) Hon. Alikia Bia

Standing Committee on Natural Resources

- (1) Hon. Inosi Kuridrani
- (2) Hon. Taito Matasawalevu
- (3) Hon. Shalen Kumar
- (4) Hon. Kalaveti Ravu

Please, take note, honourable Members, that at the next meeting, the Standing Committee on Natural Resources will elect their new Chairperson.

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense

- (1) Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua - Chairperson
- (2) Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu
- (3) Hon. Penioni Ravunawa
- (4) Hon. Taito Matasawalevu

POINT OF ORDER**Breach of Standing Order and Practices of Parliament**

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order - Standing Order 74(1)(a) - breach of Standing Order and Practices of Parliament. It is a purely procedural matter, Madam Deputy Speaker. I refer you to Standing Order 124(4). This is with regards to the Business Committee, and I shall read:

“The Business Committee may –

- (a) determine the business for each sitting day and the order in which that business will be called, and for this purpose, may determine –
 - (i) whether the normal order of business as set out in Standing Order 34(1) is to be amended for any particular sitting day.”

Having said that, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we now refer to Standing Order 34(5), it states, and I quote:

“Government business takes precedence over any other public business item except on a Friday sitting day, in which case Members’ business takes precedence over any other public business item.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, the rule is mandatory in tone, “takes precedence” meaning, it is not optional or discretionary. As per the definition under Standing Order 6 and the nature of Standing Order 40, Ministerial Statements are initiated by the Ministers and, therefore, fall squarely under the Government business. While Standing Order 40 generally allows this statement, it does not override Standing Order 34(5), in terms of priority. The Business Committee may organise the schedule, but it must do so within the limits of the Standing Order.

Permitting two Ministerial Statements on Friday directly contravenes Standing Order 34(5), unless a motion is passed to suspend the rules under Standing Order 6. Unfortunately, in this case, this particular procedure was not carried out. We need to suspend Standing Order 34(5) before the Business Committee can make changes to the Order Paper on Friday.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not against having Ministerial Statements in this Parliament on Friday. What I am saying is, there is a procedure set out in the Standing Orders that we need to follow. I have raised this previously when the *iTaukei* language was allowed in Parliament. I said, let us go back, send it to the Standing Committee, change the Standing Order and then let us allow it. Later on, we did the same thing. It was sent to the Standing Order Committee. It was changed and was allowed. Why do we have to jump the gun while the process and the procedure is clearly outlined in this particular Standing Order?

What I am requesting, Madam Deputy Speaker, is we follow the rules that are here and set for Parliament. We move a suspension motion under Standing Order 6 to suspend Standing Order 34(5), and then it goes to the Business Committee which can make that particular amendment, and then we can have the Ministerial Statement on Friday.

The other issue, Madam Deputy Speaker, is with regard to the flying minutes. For flying minutes, there used to be a process where we used to get a hard copy during parliamentary sittings. Yesterday, we just received an email, but most of the time we overlook our emails. There is no excuse in informing the honourable Members of the Business Committee, that there is a change in procedure and no hard copies would be given.

This is the Point of Order before you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we would like to have a ruling on that before we can proceed further with regard to Ministerial Statements.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Maharaj, and honorable Members. Go ahead, honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I have listened very carefully to honourable Maharaj. The decision to allow Ministerial Statements is the prerogative of the honourable Speaker. They have forgotten this very easily.

Standing Order 20 - Additional Powers of Speaker and Secretary-General states, and I quote:

“The Speaker and the Secretary-General have the power to do everything necessary or convenient to be done for, or in connection with the performance of their functions under these Standing Orders.”

It is the honourable Speaker's decision under Standing Order 20. That is why Standing Order

20 is an extraordinary power conferred unto the Speaker, and that is where the matter ends, Madam Deputy Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you. Thank you, honorable Members.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- May I?

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- You may.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- If it was Standing Order 20, it would have come in through Communications from the Speaker. It came through a Flying Minute to the Business Committee so, please, do not try to slip in Standing Order 20 to justify a wrongdoing in the first place. All we are saying....

(Chorus of interjections)

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Order, order! Please, address the Chair.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- All we are saying, Madam Deputy Speaker is to move Standing Order 6 to suspend Standing Order 34(5) and then bring it to the Business Committee.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, honourable Maharaj. I am going to have my say now. Flying Minute via email has been accepted by the Business Committee since the first term of Parliament. There is no need to suspend Standing Order 34(5), we have been applying and adhering to that.

Also, I need to point out that honourable Speaker has communicated personally to both, honourable Usamate and honourable Koya on this subject. In light of the above interpretation, the inclusion of Ministerial Statements on Friday is aboveboard and compliant with the provisions of the Standing Orders, and this is from the honourable Speaker, so we will leave it at that. We will now move on to the next item.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

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) Office of the Prime Minister and Fijian Immigration Department Annual Report 2021-2022 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 71 of 2025*)
- (2) Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Annual Report 2021-2022 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 149 of 2024*)
- (3) Fiji Teachers Registration Authority Annual Report 2022-2023 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 104 of 2025*)
- (4) Rakiraki Town Council Annual Report January-July 2020 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 184 of 2024*)
- (5) Rakiraki Town Council Annual Report 2020-2021 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 185 of 2024*)

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

- (1) Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji – 2023 Audit Report General Administration Sector (*Parliamentary Paper No. 81 of 2025*)
- (2) Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji – 2024 Audit Report Economic Services Sector (*Parliamentary Paper No. 85 of 2025*)
- (3) Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji – 2024 Audit Report Infrastructure Sector (*Parliamentary Paper No. 86 of 2025*)
- (4) Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji – 2024 Audit Report Social Services Sector (*Parliamentary Paper No. 87 of 2025*)
- (5) Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji – Performance Audit on Implementation of Climate Change Adaptation Actions in Fiji (*Parliamentary Paper No. 101 of 2025*)
- (6) Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji – Provincial Councils Volume 7 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 103 of 2025*)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the following Ministers have given notice to make Ministerial Statements under Standing Order 40 this morning, the:

- (1) Minister for Policing; and
- (2) Minister for Immigration.

The honourable Ministers may speak up to 20 minutes. After the Minister, I will then invite the honourable Leader of the Opposition or his designate, to speak on the Statement for no more than 5 minutes. There will be no other debate.

Significant Outcomes - High-Level Visit to Australia

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Deputy Prime Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition and honourable colleagues; I rise to make a statement in this august House of the significant outcomes stemming from the recent high-level visit to Australia by the honourable Prime Minister, particularly in relation to strengthening law enforcement cooperation between the Fiji Police Force and the Australian Federal Police under the Vuvale Partnership.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Fiji Police Force remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring a safe and secure Fiji for all. We recognise that effective policing in today's world cannot operate in isolation. The challenges we face, whether domestic or transnational, require strong partnerships, strategic cooperation and shared responsibility.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Fiji-Australian Vuvale Partnership continues to thrive under the Coalition Government. One key manifestation of this partnership is the Solesolevaki Memorandum of Understanding between the Fiji Police Force and the Australian Federal Police (AFP).

Since its signing, this agreement has fostered closer ties, not just between our two institutions, but across the Pacific. It has enabled shared training opportunities, joint operations, technical support, and collective action against common threats, particularly those posed by organised and transnational crime.

Madam Deputy Speaker, during the visit to Australia led by the honourable Prime Minister, we witnessed firsthand the extent of this growing partnership. I wish to place on record our sincere appreciation to the outgoing AFP Commissioner, Mr. Reece Kershaw. His commitment to Pacific-led regional policing has been instrumental in shaping this collaborative path forward.

We also take this opportunity to warmly welcome the incoming AFP Commissioner, Ms. Krissy Barrett, and look forward to her leadership in supporting our shared regional policing priorities.

A notable highlight of our visit was to the AFP's Pinkenba Hub and Training Centre in Canberra where our officers joined their colleagues from across the Pacific. The 'By the Pacific, For the Pacific' approach was clearly in action with regional officers learning, training and planning together.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Fiji has not only been a participant in AFP-supported regional initiatives, but has proudly contributed to the design, development and implementation of key projects. These include the:

- \$400 million AFP Pacific Policing Initiative; and
- INTERPOL Blue Pacific Project.

Both initiatives aim to strengthen policing capabilities across the region through structured cooperation, information sharing and joint enforcement efforts.

Under the Pacific Policing Initiative Pillar 2, the Pacific Police Support Group has been established and deployed to support operations in Vanuatu, Samoa and Palau, demonstrating the Pacific's readiness to respond collectively to security challenges. Fiji is also actively involved in the development of a formal Pacific policing network, similar in concept to the ASEANAPOL and EUROPOL. This will enhance regional interoperability and directly strengthen our ability to combat cross-border crime.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Fiji Police UPLIFT Programme is a cornerstone of our institutional reform. I am pleased to report that the AFP Executive and Project Manager, Ms. Karen Cameron, is currently in Fiji, working closely with our local project leads. Through this programme, we are undertaking critical reviews of our operational and administrative systems, with the objective of becoming a more professional, capable and trusted policing institution.

Madam Deputy Speaker, good news to the Force and to those that have already passed through. I also wish to acknowledge a key commitment made during our bilateral agreements - the AFP's support towards constructing and working towards a permanent police headquarters for the Fiji Police Force.

For decades, the Police Force headquarters and the Commissioner have been renting and relocating, incurring millions in rental costs. This support, announced during the recent visit of AFP Assistant Commissioner Nigel Ryan, is timely and deeply appreciated, particularly as we mark 150 years of policing in Fiji. Work is closely underway in identifying suitable land for this important project.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we held frank and constructive discussions with the AFP on the urgent need to strengthen joint efforts in the fight against illicit drugs and organised crime. The secondment of AFP officers to support the work of our Counter Narcotics Bureau, Serious Organised Crime and Intelligence Department has already produced results, leading to seizures, arrests and

charges, including proceeds of crime. Such outcomes show that we are not only intercepting drugs but also dismantling criminal networks and disrupting their financial operations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we acknowledge that public trust in law enforcement must be earned and maintained. The Uplift Programme is helping us identify critical areas for improvement. Last month, the AFP also provided Fiji Police with much-needed operational equipment, including vehicles, computers and support to the Forensic Science Services Unit. This support is not just operational, it is symbolic of our shared commitment to build a policing service that is effective, responsive and trusted by our people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these developments are aligned with the honourable Prime Minister's vision for an Ocean of Peace - where regional stability, unity and security underpin our development. Australia's commitment to this vision was further demonstrated by announcements to strengthen support in the areas of:

- (1) Border and maritime security,
- (2) Cybercrime and digital surveillance,
- (3) Training and infrastructure development, and
- (4) Intelligence and information sharing.

Such initiatives demonstrate the maturity of our Vuvale relationship and Australia's respect for our local context and regional leadership.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister stated during his address at the National Press Club in Canberra, and I quote:

“The Ocean of Peace sits at the centre of our outlook on the security of the Pacific which also rests on the unity of the region and the vital role that cooperation plays in building and strengthening that unity.”

In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, Fiji takes pride in its role as a regional leader, but leadership comes with responsibility. We cannot secure our community's future without regional cooperation. Our Pacific waters are increasingly targeted by crime syndicates. We are not immune, but we are not helpless either. Through strategic partnerships and enhanced capability, we are ready to respond, as demonstrated by the Fiji Police Force and AFP cooperation.

I thank the honourable Prime Minister for the opportunity to participate in this high-level engagement. It reaffirmed the importance of international partnership in strengthening our Police Force and securing our future. The Uplift Programme is gaining momentum, and with continuous support from the AFP and Government of Australia, we are confident of restoring the trust and confidence of our people in the Fiji Police Force.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his Ministerial Statement, so just a short addition from us.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think this particular partnership that we have with the Australian Government is quite important, the strength of it is quite phenomenal. The Police engagement and cooperation under the Vuvale Partnership has moved on from strength to strength, and we want to say, “thank you” to the Australian Government also for all their assistance that it always provides to Fiji with respect to all the different areas that are covered.

From what I understand, under this particular enhancement, Madam Deputy Speaker, as mentioned by the honourable Minister, the Free Uplift Programme aims to improve the operational effectiveness of the Fiji Police Force, as well as something quite critically important, it looks at public trust. The public trust in our institutions must always be at optimum level. These are the two things that are being addressed on leadership, on human resources, ethics and communications. These are very important portions and parts of the Fiji Police Force that we are going to get assistance in.

The Solesolevaki Agreement, Madam Deputy Speaker, facilitates collaboration in terms of capability development, which is huge for us. It is a very, very important aspect of policing. I think one of the important parts of that particular thing is that it looks at our security vulnerabilities. We have a great partnership with Australia and this is something that is going to be beneficial to all Fijians.

One of the other things is – I am not sure if it came up in the honourable Minister’s speech – about the community policing aspect of it. There is a lot of assistance being given to us and it is important in our rural areas and in schools in terms of education, et cetera, that will come out of it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also understand that some AFP Officers will be embedded into our Fiji Police Force. Again, this is only going to be beneficial to us because of the vast amount of experience that comes with it, and it is beneficial to our Fiji Police Force to learn from it. Regionally speaking, we are also one of the leaders in the region and it is helpful in terms of the partnership, there is a regional aspect to it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with transnational crime taking the world to a new level, it is important for Fiji to have such partnerships, to share the information and get the assistance of our neighbours in this particular aspect. It is critically important because our borders are actually porous and we need to always be constantly on top of things.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the law and order is the cornerstone of any democracy, and these are the institutions that protect it. We must be ready without fear or favour in terms of the Fiji Police Force to be able to address all issues. Any assistance that we get from and out of this Vuvale Partnership is welcomed in order for the Fiji Police Force to perform its necessary obligations and duties.

The training and technical support aspect of it is also very important to us and our officers would be glad to get that extra training and technical support, which is required because of the transnational crime issue which has gone to another level around the world. I understand that there will be some \$12 million that will be given to us to assist with respect to border security. That is a phenomenal amount of money for us to be able to step up in terms of our border, especially at the ports between Lautoka and Suva, in terms of container security, et cetera.

Again, what stands out is the actual transnational crime, the drugs transportation, et cetera, that we have recently seen and Fiji – as much as I do not want to say – has become very porous, Madam Deputy Speaker. However, it is a welcome strengthening of the relationship, and I am glad that we have had a thorough discussion whilst the honourable Prime Minister was there to strengthen the relationship even more. Once again, a big thank you to the Australian Government for offering that assistance under the partnership, not just for Fiji, but also regionally.

With those few words, I thank the honourable Minister for his Statement.

Update on Passport Services

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Madam Deputy Speaker, my short Ministerial Statement this morning is to provide an update on the passport services, an issue that has been causing a lot of anxiety and frustration, understandably, to the members of the public.

The Ministry wishes to inform the House and the public that 30,000 passport books have landed, and we have received at the Immigration Office in Suva. This batch is part of the 100,000 books that are being printed by our printers in Germany. The remaining 70,000 will arrive in Fiji over the next few months. Given this is a new financial year, the process of ordering another 100,000 this year is already in progress.

Just to put it into perspective, Madam Deputy Speaker, over the years, passport stock that has been ordered annually has been 40,000. I remember, when I was the Director Immigration back then, it had always been 40,000. This is the first time we are ordering 100,000, so there are enough books for those who need passports.

These new books, Madam Deputy Speaker, have been modified with a modern chip that meets the latest International Civil Aviation Organization standards. We took the opportunity when we were ordering 100,000 to modernise our books. It is much thinner with 32 pages instead of 64 pages, because most of the visas now are electronic. For those who travel through Australia, you scan through the e-gates, you have no stamps on your passport, so there is no need for the 64 pages like the ones we had before. It is now a passport with modern chip but with 32 pages. One of the reasons it took a little bit longer to print was because we had to produce the new chip that is now in our passports.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the printing of passports for applications that were launched between 6th January this year to 2nd August this year, which were on hold due to the shortage of books, began last night. As of this morning, approximately 400 passports have been printed. At this pace, we are going to work overtime, on Saturday and Sunday also, and we expect that by Monday, we should have around 3,000 applications dealt with and the passports are printed and ready for collection.

The collection will begin from Monday. Collection hours will be from 9.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m., and we have produced a schedule for those who want to come in and collect their passport, depending on when they lodge their application. We are working from 6th January, 2025 and working forward to 2nd August, 2025. There is a schedule that we have made, and it is in our Government website and also on Immigration *Facebook* page. Members of the public can refer to that and they will know which day to come in and collect their books.

This is really made to just to ensure that there is a little bit of orderly collection of books that place we have is not conducive to a lot of people because of the place that we are located. We also would like to inform the House and the members of the public that in addition for the Suva Office, we will open until 8.00 p.m. from Monday, and this is to allow those who cannot book a time online just to walk in and lodge their passport application. There is no need to come in the morning and crowd out. You can come in after work - just walk in and look for your application, whether it is renewal or for new books.

As I have said, we began last night, and we are hoping that at the pace we are going, by Monday, we should have about 3,000 ready for collection and people just have to look at that schedule that we will post on the site and find out the time for them to come in and collect their books.

We certainly extend our sincere appreciation to all the relevant stakeholders who played the critical role in ensuring the smooth clearance of the books from Nadi, escorting it to Suva. To our fellow Fijians, both at home and living abroad, we thank you most sincerely for your patience, understanding and support during this period. We certainly recognise the inconvenience caused and we remain committed to processing pending applications, as swiftly as possible, to meet your travel and identification needs.

We expect that by 15th of next month, we would have cleared all the backlog, including those that are lodging in at this time, and we should be back to normal processing. Again, we will work on reducing the time from 15 days to 10 days for the normal processing and from three to two days for urgent processing.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you very much, honourable Minister. I think that is, indeed, a very good news for not only Fijians living here, but also for our diaspora, *vinaka saka vakalevu*. Thank you to you and your team.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Deputy Speaker, before I give my response to the Ministerial Statement, I would just like to remember Mr. Yogeshwar Singh, who passed away earlier this week, and the funeral is tomorrow at Raralevu Cemetery. He was a very prominent person in Rewa. Having served as senior vice president in Fiji FA for a number of years, he had football at his heart. He also served as Rewa Sanatan vice president for a number of years, being a religious leader in his own way and serving the people through religious means as well.

I would like to pass our condolences, from Parliament and Opposition Chambers to his family and to his son, who is a prominent lawyer as well, Mr. Kunal Singh. We wish him and pass on our prayers during this hard time, and we are sure that his good soul is going to rest in peace in heaven.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for the update regarding the Immigration Department and the availability of passports in Fiji. I do believe that at the time when he was appointed as the Minister, the Department was in chaos, especially with regard to the backlog. Everyone wanted to travel abroad and not given a chance to get their passports printed was a huge frustration which was laid upon the Immigration staff. I believe it reached your office as well.

I thank you very much for your hard work and effort in trying to play the catch-up game now, in ensuring that everyone who has done the application and the application is in backlog, so good news for them within two weeks they will have their passport, and they are free to travel wherever they want to.

Just a few of the points from our side, Madam Deputy Speaker, with regards to the waiting time. As you have mentioned, the Suva Immigration Office cannot cater for hundreds of people. If we can book somewhere, places like Vodafone Arena or National Gymnasium, so that it is convenient for the people to come and sit and wait rather than waiting outside in the sun. Some of them might be senior citizens and some suffering from NCD. Just provide a conducive environment for them to come and collect their passport, especially in times of this panic and there will be a lot of chaos.

No matter how much we try to make people understand that there is a schedule list that they need to follow to come and collect their passport, everyone will rush. I think a bit of mental support needs to be provided to the staff, as well as to how they are supposed to handle.

There have been some very, I would say, disorganised approaches or experiences by some of the customers visiting the Ministry of Immigration, and I think I did mention a few examples in my speech as well. I apologise, honourable Minister, I am yet to give the names of the person who did

actually lodge their particular complaint. I will do so after this, during tea break.

One more important thing, I believe, to note here is the machines. While we have the passports, if we overload the printers, we do not want a scenario in the next couple of days where the printers have gone down because of overload placed on them in printing the passports. I think that is something that the Ministry needs to look into very soon as well, if we can get in more printers to print our passports so that we are not in the same situation.

While on one side we are trying to fulfil the backlog, on the other side, there is a hold to the process because of the failure. I believe it is good news for everyone in Fiji that the passport is finally back, and I thank the honourable Minister and his team and wish him all the best for the next two weeks while they are doing a catch-up game.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you also for sharing your condolences towards Mr. Singh and his family, the Fiji Football Association, the Rewa Foot Association and, of course, the Sanatan family.

Honourable Members, I have received a note to say that we should break at 10.30 which is still 11 minutes away. I think we will carry on until we reach 10.30 a.m.

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

MOU – Republic of Indonesia National Narcotics Board and Ministry of Policing
(Question No. 122/2025)

HON. T.R. MATASAWALEVU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Policing update Parliament on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Republic of Indonesia National Narcotics Board and the Ministry?

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, *ni bula vinaka tale*. I thank the honourable Members for his question. I rise to inform and provide an update of the agreement MOU between the Republic of Indonesia National Narcotics Board and Fiji's Ministry of Policing which was approved in Cabinet on 24th June this year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, by way of background, at the outset I would like to register our appreciation to the honourable Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs for the work that he had done to initiate this particular arrangement.

Indonesia has been countering the dangers of narcotics since 1971. The BNN or is now referred to as National Narcotics Agency was established in 1999 under the name then of the National Narcotics Coordinating Board (BKNN). It was later renamed its current name in 2002. Sir, BNN is an institution with a mandate of coordinating 25 related government agencies and coupled with operational authority with the duties and functions of:

- (1) Coordinating relevant government agencies in the formulation and implementation of national drug control policies; and
- (2) Coordinating the implementation of the National Drug Control policies.

This is aligned very well to the government's National Counter Narcotic Strategy 2023 to 2028. A study visit was conducted last year by the Permanent Secretary of Home Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Smith to share information and understand what they do in Indonesia. The visit was very successful as it agreed that BNN and the Counter Narcotic- Bureau through then the Ministry of Home Affairs to collaborate through a written agreement.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is an ongoing process that we are proceeding to work at and soon we will be seeing a team from Indonesia visiting us here in Fiji, where we are going to discuss in more detail on what the MOU is about. This strategic partnership will provide a framework for ongoing technical support, professional development, intelligence exchange, and institutional strengthening to address evolving threats of drug trafficking and abuse. We are now drafting an implementation plan on how to go about when we actually meet the team from Indonesia soon. The agreement will be signed after that arrangement.

Completion of Labasa Airport
(Question No. 123/2025)

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

Can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation inform Parliament on the exact timeline for the completion of the Labasa Airport upgrade?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, for someone who is from Labasa, who knows the land really well, I am sure he knows what the programme is, but as I had mentioned in my Budget response, the aviation sector is critical to the economy. It is also critical in unlocking the full economic potential of the North. It is timely that there is a major investment into the Labasa Airport via Fiji Airports and the World Bank to finance the Na Vualiku Project.

The Labasa Airport Terminal upgrade is a major infrastructure investment being implemented by Fiji Airports. The total investment for the upgrade, including both the temporary and permanent terminals is currently estimated at \$8.57 million, funded by the Fiji Airports. The upgrade has been delivered in two phases to ensure continued airport operations during construction, with a temporary terminal facility and a permanent terminal facility.

The construction of a temporary terminal began in October 2024 and was completed ahead of schedule in January 2025. Demolition of the old terminal commenced in early 2025, immediately following the commissioning of the temporary terminal. Construction of the new terminal is currently underway and was scheduled for completion by June 2026.

However, after the groundbreaking ceremony in February this year, members of the business community in Labasa, through the Government, requested that Fiji Airports consider baggage carousel and air-conditioning as part of the design of the new terminal. This meant that a bigger terminal building is required to cater for the carousel. Plans had to be revised, noting that there is already a limited space available at the current terminal location. As a result, the project will be completed by the end of 2026, subject to weather condition. The additional works are estimated to be \$2.8 million.

Going further, the new solar powered terminal will feature dedicated arrival and departure halls, enhanced passenger amenities and seating expanded space to meet future aviation demand in the Northern Division. Financed by the Na Vualiku Project, a design and supervision consultancy covering both, Labasa and Savusavu Airports was awarded in 2025.

Alongside terminal construction, critical upgrades are being implemented to improve safety, capacity and climate resilience at Labasa Airport:

- (1) Airside and landside civil works, including new car parking, fencing, access roads, stormwater systems and creek embankments protection.
- (2) Construction of a new fire station to strengthen emergency response capabilities.
- (3) A runway pavement study and upgrades to ensure long-term operational reliability.
- (4) Procurement and implementation of a Remote Tower Aerodrome Flight Information System (AFIS) to enhance air safety.

The design and procurement phase is expected to take 12 months, with another 18 months of the civil works, with a target completion date of December 2027. The procurement of the AFIS system is expected to close by September 2025, with a target delivery and commissioning date of November 2026.

The budget under the Na Vualiku Project for the aviation component is \$32.4 million, including the works at Labasa and Savusavu Airports. I might also add, in line with Government's commitment to reducing greenhouse emissions and improving operational efficiency, a feasibility study will shortly commence for the installation of a solar panel array at the Labasa Airport. The study will assess the technical and financial viability of incorporating renewable energy solutions to reduce electricity costs and the airport's overall carbon footprint.

The investment in Labasa Airport reflects the Government's commitment to unlocking Vanua Levu's tourism and economic potential by improving air connectivity, comfort and operational efficiency at one of the North's key transport hubs. As I had mentioned to the House in May 2025, we are also looking to the future. An Expression of Interest has been issued for a feasibility study for a new airport in Vanua Levu, with a contract to be awarded in October 2025. The ongoing investment in the North will help address regional equity and help Vanua Levu and Taveuni achieve sustained growth and improve livelihoods for local communities.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I have been reliably informed that a few months back, despite the non-approval from AFL, one of Fiji Airways' ATR landed at Labasa Airport. It was a risk to the lives of people. Can the honourable Minister highlight us on that?

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- He is the Minister for Aviation, he should be aware of that? I do not think you are the Minister.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I am sorry, honourable Member, can you ask that slowly? I am not getting you.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- I have been reliably informed that ATR72 landed in Labasa Airport despite the non-approval from AFL. Is it true or false?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- False.

HON. S.S. KIRPAL.- You cannot say that, the honourable Minister is there.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Deputy Speaker. I think that is hearsay. I am not aware of what is happening, but it is a good time to now say that in my reply, I am talking about strengthening the runway, because there is a question mark on whether you can take the ATR72. That is why it is now confined to ATR42 at this point. That is part of the of the plan going forward, to make it to make it compatible to any kind of ATR72 aircraft.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Deputy Speaker, my supplementary question - I think the honorable Minister just mentioned about the runway. I believe it is not the full runway that is an issue. It is just, I think, 100 metres or so where the plane actually lands.

My question to the honourable Minister is, are you looking into renovating that 100 metre runways so that an ATR72 can land at a full capacity or renovating the whole runway once this project is over? At the moment, there are restrictions and flying to Labasa is becoming very expensive.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- That is a good observation, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I highlighted that what we are doing is to make Labasa one of the premium hubs in the North. So, it will be total in its scope. If we need to open the whole runway, we will go through the whole runway. I know right now there is a portion that needs to be strengthened, but if you look at the 10-year plan, we want Labasa to be compliant with the ATR72.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Minister, in light of the fact that you are intimating that a complete runway will have to be done at some stage, what is the actual backup plan? I assume that that entire runway will have to be shut down not operational whilst that is being done. Is there an alternative way that we are going to be dealing with this? There is a large amount of traffic going into Vanua Levu, as it is difficult to get into Savusavu. What is the plan with that?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- It will be managed in a manner that will not stifle the traffic into Labasa. It could be confined to the portion that needs strengthening, or it could be the whole runway. However, if it comes to that, there will be backup plans, I can assure you of that. It will not happen without any backup plans to be in place. I might also want to add at this point that there is also work that is possible for Savusavu. There are designs that people are designing. They are looking at the current airport runway and looking at ways that they can take in bigger aircrafts. So, it is all in the works, but be assured there will not come a time where nothing will be flying into Labasa or nearby.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will now take our tea break and resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.34 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.11 a.m.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- The next question, Question No. 124/2025 was supposed to have been asked by honourable Joseph Nand who has had to excuse himself. His question will now be asked by the honourable Virendra Lal.

Standalone Traffic Centre Cameras by LTA
(Question No. 124/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport update Parliament on the progress of the Land Transport Authority's installation of standalone traffic centre cameras?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to update the House on the progress made by the Land Transport Authority (LTA) in the installation and deployment of standalone traffic centre cameras, which are a vital part of our broader national strategy, to improve road safety and ensure greater compliance with our traffic laws. The LTA continues to strengthen its enforcement capabilities through both fixed and portable camera systems. These efforts are underpinned by data driven approach to ensure that the most effective and targeted use is made of technology.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as of today, the LTA operates 14 fixed speed cameras, these are rotated across 31 designated enforcement sites. The selection of these sites have been based on a comprehensive risk assessment, analysis of historical crash data and the prevailing traffic volumes, ensuring that enforcement is prioritised in high-risk areas.

Further to this, in the 2024-2025 financial year, the Authority procured 12 new portable speed camera units to enhance its mobile enforcement capability. One of these units is already operational in the field. The remaining 11 are currently undergoing a verification and calibration process with the Department of National Trade, Measurement and Standards.

Upon completion of this process, these units will be progressively deployed to locations identified as high risk across the country. To share some enforcement results, in 2023, a total of 143,577 Traffic Infringement Notices (TINs) were issued. In 2024, this increased to 169,769. For 2025 as of today's date, 118,699 TINs have already been issued. Of these, 12,603 were issued through the use of portable speed cameras. This steady increase is indicative not only of enhanced enforcement through technological means, but also of a sustained effort by the authorities to curb speeding and encourage behavioural change on our roads.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the deployment of both fixed and portable cameras remains a cornerstone of the LTA's enforcement strategy. This is aligned with Government's commitment to leveraging smart technology to improve public safety and protect lives. Whilst speed cameras remain critical in monitoring high risk zones, the allocations are well known and static, resulting in reduced deterrent effect over time. Drivers often slow down near fixed units and then resume speeding shortly after.

On the other hand, portable cameras are mobile, discrete and adaptable, allowing enforcement officers to respond swiftly to complaints from the public, target emerging black spots and cover wide areas. This element of unpredictability encourages more consistent compliance rather than conditional obedience.

As part of our ongoing commitment to road safety and better enforcement of traffic laws, the LTA, through the Ministry, has allocated funding under the 2025-26 National Budget for the procurement of five additional portable speed cameras. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not a luxury; it is a necessary response to the alarming rate of road deaths, particularly those caused by speeding.

Speeding has remained the leading cause of road fatalities over the past three years. In 2023, we recorded 77 road fatalities, with 34 resulting from speeding. In 2024, we saw 66, with 24 linked directly to speeding. As of 4th August, 2025, there have been 39 road fatalities, 23 of which are related to speeding. These are not just numbers, they are lives lost, families broken, and communities affected.

Madam Speaker, we remain steadfast in our commitment to building a safer and more responsible road environment for all Fijians. The Ministry will continue to work closely with LTA and relevant stakeholders to ensure our enforcement teams remain responsive, robust and aligned with global best practices.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister and the Government for this initiative and for the additional speed cameras mentioned. My question to the honourable Minister is (this is mostly for public clarity), can he clarify why some of the speed cameras in certain areas are working and the following week they are not working? These people say, the lid is closed, so we will just go above the speed limit.

Secondly, is there any consideration in increasing the speed limit in certain areas where, if it is 50, it can go to 60 or 65? I am sure when you travel from Nakasi to Nausori, some drivers feel that the speed limit is too slow.

The last bit to this is the Ministry considering giving a ticket to those driving extremely well below the speed limit, because slow drivers create risky drivers. Someone is going at 30 in an 80 zone; they will be creating a lot of risky drivers.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- In terms of speed cameras not working, probably technical issues, and we will need to look at that. In terms of increasing speed limits, we are trying to decrease speed, but increasing speed limits in certain areas could be looked into in terms of the volume there and the suitability of the specific road. Those who are slow, yes, that definitely is an issue we all have experienced, but in other jurisdictions, they have slow lanes and fast lanes. That is an issue that we really need to look at and assess properly before we can proceed with any further development.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Minister, these standalone traffic centre cameras are a very good source of revenue for the Government. In places where there is heavy traffic and there are issues, are we looking at installations being put into those places permanently, and the removal thereafter of, for example, five humps in a space of 100 metres? It does not make sense to have these cameras rather than five different humps to slow the traffic down. In terms of revenue, there is a substantial amount of revenue that comes out of these cameras. Eventually, when you have enough cameras, will you remove all the humps?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, that is always a challenge, the conflict between the community who are affected by speeding vehicles and the need for the road users, so there is an ongoing assessment. Some of the speed humps is a result of serious accidents. After we put it, there has definitely been an improvement. There are issues regarding the quality of speed humps and gaps between them, definitely, that is something the FRA will be looking at.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Minister, is there a standard size for humps all around the country? We have different humps and different sizes all over the place. There are cars that are quite low that cannot get over the humps. Is there a standard that exist that every hump must be a particular shape and size?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot give you the technical details, but from my understanding, it is not standard, but it depends on the specific location. For example, there are thin strips in specific areas that are suitable for that specific area and purpose. That is what my understanding is, including the height or whatever specification that is there.

GEF Pacific Constituency Meeting
(Question No. 125/2025)

HON. K.V. RAVU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Environment and Climate Change update Parliament on Fiji's participation in the GEF Pacific Constituency Meeting and how Fiji plans to strengthen its environmental project oversight and accountability?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable Ravu for the question.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established before the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. It is a family of funds for the environment, focusing on five focal areas which includes biodiversity loss, chemical and waste, climate change, international waters and land degradation, and serving six international conventions.

The GEF Council comprises 32 members appointed by constituencies of GEF members - 14 from developed countries, 16 from developing countries and two from economies in transition. The Council meets twice annually to develop, adopt and evaluate the operational policies and programmes of GEF finance activities. It also reviews and approves work programmes, making decisions by consensus. The GEF constituency meets every two years to coordinate approaches to GEF engagement, consider new policies and GEF operational plans, and strengthen project oversight.

Madam Deputy Speaker, from 13th to 14th May, 2025, Fiji took part in the Pacific Regional Training Workshop for GEF operational focal points. The training was aimed at strengthening project oversight capabilities and provided a platform for delegates to exchange experiences, discuss challenges, and share lessons learned. Focal points were introduced to various support roles and tools, including the newly established funding envelope dedicated to supporting them in carrying out their GEF project oversight duties.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this training was then followed by the Pacific Constituency Meeting from 15th to 16th May, both constructive and highly influential. Fiji's UN Permanent Representative, His Excellency Filipo Tarakinikini, chaired the meeting in his capacity as the Pacific Constituency Representative to the GEF Council.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Fiji, through the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, nominated His Excellency Ambassador Tarakinikini to the role of GEF Council Member, following the Pacific's role of representation in the GEF Council meeting proceedings for a number of years. His appointment was supported by the Pacific GEF Focal Point, given his continuous advocacy for GEF matters, and his nomination was formalised in May 2024.

Madam Deputy Speaker, His Excellency's role as the Pacific Constituency representative is critical, as he tends to represent the interests of all Pacific Island countries during the GEF Council meetings. I had the honour of leading Fiji's delegation to the Pacific Constituency Meeting and was supported by the Permanent Secretary for Environment and Climate Change, Dr. Sivendra Micheal, and the Director of Environment, Ms. Senimili Baleicakau. Together, we actively contributed to shaping the outcomes, particularly the decision taken at the meeting, to enhance the role of focal points and to ensure more effective decisions and design, implementation and monitoring of GEF projects throughout the Pacific.

The Pacific Constituency meeting in the Cook Islands also provided an opportunity to discuss key policy documents of the July Council Meeting, focusing on strengthening GEF partnership, including options for expanding the number of GEF implementing agencies and policy amendments to streamline the project cycle. For the current GEF-8 replenishment cycle for 2022 - 2026, a budget line was approved to further empower and support focal points in their project oversight functions as part of the new Country Engagement Strategy. This dedicated support will cover the cost of field visits, supporting focal points to perform their responsibility in overseeing the project's execution during the whole four-year GEF replenishment cycle.

For the Pacific, this support component is operationalised through the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), with a USD32,000 allocated per country. For this programme, Fiji will work with SPREP to design and deliver a customised national training programme on project oversight, tailored to our needs. This dedicated support will empower Fiji's GEF operational focal points to have a more direct insight into and control over GEF projects underway in our country; increase coordination between focal points, key national agencies and stakeholders of GEF portfolio; and enhance the capacity to conduct project monitoring and evaluation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Fiji further strengthened its continuing support for GEF portfolio oversight by:

- (1) convening meetings of the National Steering Committee on GEF project.
- (2) conducting consultation with relevant stakeholders, including key national agencies, project executing agencies, civil society and stakeholders engaged in GEF project execution.
- (3) convening regular briefings with GEF agencies and project executing entities to receive regular updates on progress achieved and challenges faced. Our Government agencies will be invited to these briefings to encourage coordination.
- (4) delivery of information sharing sessions and other knowledge sharing events and training for national stakeholders, GEF agencies and key Government agencies.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Fiji's participation in the GEF Pacific Constituency meeting was aligned with our commitment to effective environment governance and project delivery. The outcome to be communicated to the GEF Council and will strengthen our role in advocating Pacific priorities. Our national efforts to strengthen oversight and accountability are ongoing and multifaceted, encompassing legal frameworks, strategic planning and institutional strengthening, and a focus on integrating environmental consideration across all sectors with a strong emphasis on national ownership and effective utilisation of international funding.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, as Fiji's focal point to GEF, will continue to progress Fiji's work on the implementation of the national and regional projects to ensure that project outcomes align with our national priorities, and its tangible benefits reach and improve the livelihoods and lives of our communities.

Strategy to Maintain Fiji Airways' HK Route
(Question No. 126/2025)

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

Can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation outline the Government's strategy to maintain the Fiji Airways' Hong Kong route alongside the planned expansion to Shanghai?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, Fiji Airways remains deeply committed to its role as a national brand ambassador, carefully balancing enhancement of connectivity with the broader goals of sustainable tourism development, while recognising Fiji's infrastructure constraints, such as limited airport and hotel capacities.

The Coalition Government understands the importance of adopting a measured and strategic approach to route development. This ensures that growth is not only ambitious but also supported by the necessary ground infrastructure to maintain high-quality service and a positive visitor experience.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in line with this approach, the Government remains committed to supporting Fiji Airways' Hong Kong route, which currently operates three direct return services per week between Nadi and Hong Kong, reflecting a strategic response to a steadily growing demand and the airline's dedication to maintaining a competitive presence on this route. It used to be five times a week before COVID-19, so we are building up to that frequency.

On the potential for direct services, the major mainland Chinese cities such as Shanghai is favourable. The Government and Fiji Airways are carefully considering experiences from comparable markets where rapid increases in capacity, following the entry of major carriers have led to challenges with market balance. Although Shanghai is considered the preferred gateway, we remain cautious of potential market share erosion and, therefore, proceeding with careful deliberation.

Given Fiji's size and resource constraints, any expansion into new long-haul route is being carefully assessed to ensure long-term sustainability. The Government is mindful of the competitive landscape, particularly with the presence of large carriers operating on extensive networks and with greater economies of scale. As such, the Government continues to take a measured and strategic approach, prioritising initiatives to deliver stable, scalable outcomes for Fiji's national carrier and the broader economy, including balancing risks related to operational costs, market demand, and economic volatility.

As an alternative to immediate direct services, the Government is also exploring the possibility of code-share arrangement with Chinese carriers. This approach aligns with global aviation trends where code-sharing optimises network reach and passenger convenience without the immediate cost of opening new direct routes.

In the meantime, the Hong Kong route remains a priority, given its strong performance indicators, including consistent passenger load factors and its strategic value as a regional gateway connecting Fiji to Asia-Pacific markets. The Government remains committed to supporting and strengthening this route. We will continue to build strategic relationships with regional partners to position Fiji Airways for gradual, sustainable growth into new markets, aligning Fiji's long-term economic development goals. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Minister, has there been any discussion in terms of reciprocal rights coming out of China? I know the discussion is that we can code share, but has reciprocity form part of the discussions at the moment?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, there is an Air Services Agreement (ASA) between China and Fiji already - it is a matter of activating that ASA, and that is where the specifics come in, the technical stuff. In the ASA, the point of entry into China was to be Beijing, but we have convinced the Chinese Government that we prefer Shanghai, so most of the dialogue right now is on Shanghai.

Yes, there is a lot of dialogue happening. As I had indicated in what I was sharing with you, we are very clear on how we want to get into China. We are a small airline, the most successful in this part of the world, a national treasure and an asset that one we do not want to lose. Mixing it with the big boys, and there are five big boys in China, will lead to some really major challenges for our national airline.

We are very clear with the Chinese, even to the extent that we have asked for exclusive rights for a number of years. So, our position to the Chinese is very clear. The way they negotiate, they play hard balls, but we are very clear – this is the way forward for us. Give Fiji Airways some exclusivity to help Fiji build strength in China before we allow the big boys to come in. That is where we are right now. So, dialogue is happening, but in the meantime, Hong Kong is being strengthened. As I said, it used to be five a week prior to COVID and we are slowly building up to that.

Plans to Combat Termite Infestation in Schools
(Question No. 127/2025)

HON. I. TUIWAILEVU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Education update Parliament on the plans and measures the Ministry has in place to combat and address the termite infestation in schools?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Deputy Speaker, the termite infestation is severely impacting schools in the Western Division in terms of disruptions to classes, improper learning and teaching environment to students. In the Western Division, there is about a total of 44 schools that have been infected with termite infestation; 11 schools are classified as having severely impact.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the infestation presents a serious biological and structural hazard to the school infrastructure and poses safety risks for both students and staff. The immediate response from the Ministry of Education, we are working in close collaboration with the key partners - UNICEF Pacific and the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) in the implementation of multifaceted emergency responses.

A short-term measure, UNICEF Pacific has provided temporary tent facilities to ensure that learning is not disrupted. To-date, six of the severely affected schools have received tents, which can accommodate up to 50 students. The schools that have received this assistance are:

- St. Thomas Primary - Two Tents;
- Lautoka Delana Primary - One Tent;
- Lovu Sangam Primary - Two Tents;
- Saru MGM Kindergarten - One Tent;
- Ami Chandra Memorial School - Two Tents; and
- Lautoka School for Special Education - One Tent.

The remaining five severely affected schools will receive similar support upon the arrival of the next shipment of tents from UNICEF.

The long-term strategy, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that we are working with our partners, and the Ministry has initiated a dual-track mitigation plan, focussing on the installation of termite-resistant, temporary learning spaces and the application of routine chemical termiticides and bait systems. We are working for the comprehensive upgrades, which include the replacement of wooden ceilings, more durable PVC boards, and the reconstruction of roof truss using steel-eye beams. We will also be using non-wood for treated materials and improving moisture control measures to prevent future infestation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a planned collaboration between the Ministry and Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, in which there will be monthly inspections and chemical treatment at the affected school sites to ensure the infestation is contained and eradicated.

For training of termite management protocols, this will be taught at Fiji Head Teachers Conference which will be held on 20th to 22nd August, 2025. There is also an ECE Conference. We are using all these conferences of teachers to try and provide the training for management protocol. For ECE Conference on 25th, 26th and 29th August in the three divisions - for Central and Eastern Divisions will be held in Suva, and then in the Western Division, and then the Northern Division.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as part of the commitment for infrastructure, 2025-2026 financial year, these schools - St. Thomas, Lovu Sangam, and Lautoka Methodist are also in the pipeline for infrastructure development.

HON. H. CHAND.- Madam Deputy Speaker, according to the honourable Minister for Education, there are several schools in Fiji, particularly in the Western Division are facing significant termite infestations. Some schools are severely affected. There are five schools in Lautoka, and the students are currently learning under tents, which is not a very conducive learning environment. Can the honourable Minister update Parliament by when the repairs and the maintenance of these five schools would be completed?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Deputy Speaker, as I mentioned, it is an ongoing process, and we are working in collaboration with the school managements on way forward to construct new school infrastructure.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you honourable Minister for the initiative. Yes, indeed, the termite issue does exist. Is it going to be a school management and government funded initiative? The point is, is government going to budget for this repair work, also including with the funds raised by the fundraisings, which is a burden on parents and children? Can you just highlight that?

HON. A.M RADRODRO.- Madam Deputy Speaker, we will consider all options available to rebuild the schools.

Implementation of HIV Outbreak Response Plan
(Question No. 129/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services update Parliament on the implementation of the HIV Outbreak Response Plan?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to the oral question by honourable Ratu Vakalalabure on the HIV Outbreak Response Plan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as this House may be aware, the Ministry declared an HIV outbreak on 22nd June this year. Since then, the powers under the HIV/AIDS Act 2011, the HIV Board was formed, and the National HIV Outbreak and Cluster Response Taskforce which developed a constant outbreak response plan guided by several technical committees formed to operationalise the seven pillars of the outbreak response plan. Further in June, the Ministry announced the creation of a stand-alone Sexual and Reproductive Health Unit and HIV Unit, which was formed to rapidly respond to evolving epidemic while positioning itself as a responsive, sustainable unit that is fit for purpose.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Unit is being supported by the National HIV Outbreak and Cluster Response Taskforce and delivering budgetary support from a \$10 million Government allocation provided in the recently passed National Budget. Before providing an update on the current status of the plan, the Government would like to acknowledge the Australian Government's assistance for providing technical assistance valued at \$5.7 million to implement the upgrade response plan. This is in addition to the support it provides to the Ministry through bilateral health programmes.

In the last month, the Government of New Zealand also announced an allocation of \$5.2 million to support the implementation of the Outbreak Response Plan. The following updates and progress towards our national goals would not be possible without the hard work of numerous Ministry of Health staff, countless volunteers, United Nations and other technical partners, Non-Government Organisations, six technical agencies engaged by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and finally, communities who are affected by HIV.

The following are key updates under the seven-pillar of the Outbreak Response Plan:

- (1) Prevention - Significant progress has been made in strengthening HIV prevention through community leadership, targeted outreach and support systems. Over 100 key populations representatives engaged in outreach planning across Western and Northern Division insights have shaped a draft peer-led National Outreach Model. The National HIV Prevention Forum was held in July, which aligned partners around inclusive stigma reducing outreach strategies.
- (2) Partnership agreements have been signed with five community led organisations (Rainbow Pride Foundation, Fiji Network of People Living with HIV, Strumpet Alliance, Survival Advocacy Network, Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network) and are being finalised to operationalise prevention outreach.
- (3) Harm reduction efforts progressed through a peer-led workshop with people who inject drugs, a legal review to support Needle and Syringe Programme implementation, and the recruitment of a harm reduction expert, who developed a Cabinet Paper based on inputs from a national stakeholder consultation held in Suva.
- (4) Prevention commodities such as male and female condoms, along with lubricants were distributed through 167 installed dispensers in the Suva area (over 92, 000 condoms and 11,400 lubricants were dispensed).

- (5) Point-of-care HIV testing expanded through CSOs in workplace settings and peer educators in 22 subdivisions are skilled at delivering point-of-care HIV screening.
- (6) The Life Skills Module is under final review with UNICEF.
- (7) The draft pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) implementation guidelines have been developed and the Prep TWG led by UNAIDS will oversee the next phase of the implementation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the priorities over the next coming months include:

- Endorse and operationalise a peer-led national outreach model in the four Divisions;
- Launch national HIV Prevention Campaign (inclusive of media, roadshows and safe festival pilot);
- Expand condom distribution and workplace screening nationally;
- Finalise NSP implementation plan, M&E tools, and conduct accessibility research; and
- Recruit national campaign lead and deliver targeted outreach training.

In terms of the treatment, care and support, key actions have improved service coverage and continuity of care:

- There are 22 subdivisional care teams established; seven now delivering integrated HIV services. This will allow for decentralised and integrated HIV care beyond the current three HIV treatment clinics.
- Pilot of the integrated prevention-of-parent-to-child-transmission clinic at CWM Hospital, which will improve prevention of mother-to-child transmission.
- Healthcare worker capacity-building continues, and private sector engagement is expanding service access.
- Hepatitis C treatment and care guidelines consultation completed in July.
- Priorities in the coming months for treatment, care and support.
- Finalisation and implementation of a roadmap for decentralising prevention-of-parent-to-child transmission in HIV services.

In terms of diagnostics, progress made in improving accessibility and decentralisation of HIV testing:

- Requirements gathering completed for national patient tracking.
- Tamanu, a patient management information system is currently being configured for use at the sexual and reproductive health hubs and will assist patient records and reporting of HIV test outcomes.

Fiji's Chief Pathologist has authorised clinic-based confirmatory rapid HIV testing. This means we can now reduce the time of testing and treatment – an important initiative recommended by WHO. Priorities in the coming months include:

- Activate Tamanu at the three sexual reproductive health hubs; and
- Pilot full point-of-care HIV testing to reduce delays and improve linkages to care.

Data for impact - steps taken to strengthen surveillance and data use:

- WHO-supported rapid assessment of the national HIV surveillance system and epidemiological update completed, and final report is pending.

- Key recommendations focus on data standardisation, case reporting and streamlined monitoring.

Priorities in the coming months:

- Implement the WHO-Kirby recommendations, including national HIV case reporting and IT infrastructure.

Enabling environment - a national consultation of the proposed phased introduction of Needle and Syringe Programmes in Fiji, chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Health and WHO representative:

Priorities in the coming months: A dedicated, faith-based consultation to be convened to build shared understanding and support for a compassionate, health-led HIV response rooted in human rights and dignity for NSP.

Media training - a 10-part series to be launched by UNAIDS in partnership with the Fiji Media Association to improve HIV-sensitive reporting, reduce stigma and promote accurate public messaging.

Partnership and coordination: Successful Development Partner Roundtable was convened in June 2025 by the Ministry of Health and the UN Resident Coordinator, securing a continued donor alignment and financial commitments.

Procurement and supply chain management: Progress is made in securing HIV-related commodities and improving storage:

- 18-month procurement plan to be finalised and submitted to the UNDP;
- storage needs identified for Sexual Reproductive Health Hubs and subdivisional facilities;
- National and divisional pharmacist roles filled; orientation and mentoring are provided.

Priorities in the coming months for procurement and supply chain:

- Prepare facilities for incoming commodities;
- Re-train staff on inventory management (mSupply) and complete infrastructure upgrades; and
- Finalise SOPs and key indicators for procurement and supply chain.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the HIV Outbreak Response Plan is well underway, with concrete progress made in prevention, treatment, diagnostics, surveillance and system support. We are strengthening service delivery, mobilising communities and addressing structural barriers to care.

While the road we need to travel is long and filled with obstacles, I am confident that with Government leadership, Cabinet support and strong collaboration with our development partners, and NGOs, we can stabilise the current outbreak and lay the foundation for a resilient and inclusive, sustainable HIV response in Fiji.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, is the Ministry looking to regulate the purchase of needles? When you look at pharmacies, I understand diabetic patients purchase needles and syringes, but there are a lot of people who come to pharmacies as well who do not have diabetes, and are used for drugs, one of the reasons that led to the rise in HIV. So, is the Ministry looking forward to having it as a controlled item, and only for those patients who need it?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, Government, through the Ministry of Health, is looking into the idea of needle sharing programme. Currently, as it is, should you want a needle together with a syringe, you will need to have a prescription for it but in terms of the needle and syringe exchange programme, it is an issue. Some of the in the public say that we are promoting drug use, but we must be reminded that the treatment of drug use is trying to treat the addiction. In doing so, our aim is to reduce the transmission. And if the transmission is fueled by the sharing of needles, then studies have shown that it has worked in other jurisdictions.

It is something that the Ministry of Health will consider, as one of its forms of reducing transmission within Fiji. Again, it will need awareness, so that it is received by the public. With that being said, it is something that is within the plan, and we are hoping to have it piloted in the near future. It's just to try and reduce the transmission. But nevertheless, as your question says, if it is regulated, you cannot get a needle or syringe from a pharmacy without a prescription.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I think for all of us, what is happening with HIV is the real scare. We have always been behind Papua New Guinea, now in the second highest in the Asia Pacific, and your focus is on reducing transmission. And I appreciate the detailed outbreak plan that you have described for us. In your modelling, when is it likely the rate of transmission growth will begin to stabilise or decline? Do you have any estimates?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- The estimates shows that we are still in the early stages. We will see more cases before we start to see a reduction, because we will be doing more testing and treatment-wise.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- I thank the Minister for the comprehensive answer he has given, and I support the program whereby the distribution of needles is important to stop the transmission of HIV. We had a conference, a pharmaceutical society conference, last year, whereby both the Ministry of Health and police officers from the Anti-Narcotics Bureau were present.

Unfortunately, they have conflicting views about distribution and are rightfully informed. Can you inform the Parliament if there are any talks between the Ministry of Health and the Anti-Narcotics Bureau? On one side, we are trying to promote the distribution of free needles, so that the transmission of HIV goes down and as stated by you on the other side, those pharmacies that fall under the red zone are not to sell needles to patients. Can there be some discussion between the two agencies so that the conflicting views do not go out? There is one message that is passed on from the Government side, so that we can curb the transmission of HIV Aids in the country.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, yes, it is part of the plan. As it is, it is still probably illegal to obtain needles and syringes without a prescription. And that is what the police officers are saying. It is part of the broader national narcotics strategy, we play a role in terms of harm reduction and through harm reduction and trying to reduce the transmission. We hope that we can pilot a programme in one of our health centres to be able to do a syringe exchange programme so we can reduce the transmission, and we will be working closely with the police.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- In light of the fact that we all know the numbers are quite high, HIV transmission is not a new thing. There is a lot of paraphernalia that would still be available to us to get out as quickly as possible. My question to you is, have you or are you going to secure as much advertising space as we can concerning blasting this issue up with all the general public and all our young people, and also using the new form in terms of social media and also blast messaging that can happen through Vodafone and Digicel, et cetera, to get the messaging out as much as we can as fast as we can because it is getting out of hand, and it is about the protection of our young people. We all know that the education system on this was really good, and it sort of slackened off because

the numbers were down. But we are now in a dire position to protect our young people. Have you been able to secure the advertising, or are you looking at blast messaging as quickly as possible?

HON. DR RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Awareness is an integral part of the plan, and we will make sure that we use all forms of information dissemination that are available, whether it is through mainstream media or social media. And we will be working closely with the mainstream media to ensure we maximise our efforts in terms of disseminating information.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, since it is a national issue, this is to honourable Minister, is it true that the Aspen Ba and Lautoka Hospital are no longer supplying medicines to the patients? They have been asked to go to the pharmacy. Is that true?

HON. DR RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- The medications are available at the Ba and Lautoka hospitals for inpatients.

Written Question

ECE Centres, Primary Schools and Secondary Schools
(Question No. 130/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Education inform Parliament on how many new ECE Centres, Primary Schools and Secondary Schools have been built in the last three years indicating the year it was established?

¹ HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I table my response.

END OF WEEK STATEMENTS

Factors for iTaukei Development and Growth

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, honourable Prime Minister, honourable Ministers, honourable Members of Parliament, esteemed guests and the people of Fiji, particularly the *iTaukei* who are listening and watching today; *bula vinaka*.

I stand before you today not merely as a parliamentarian, but as a son of Fiji, and I wish to share a personal truth. I have been blessed with a career that I spent 18 years in the military, 20 years in commercial life, and now 11 years in this Parliament. But before I was one of these things, I was and remain a son from my village of Nalotu, which belongs to my *tikina* on the beautiful island of Kadavu. I am a member of my *mataqali* and proud of my traditional roles in my *yavusa*. My life has often taken me far from my ancestral home, and like many *iTaukei*, I have known the hardships of life lived away but I have ensured that my children and I will never forget who we are and where we came from.

This personal journey is why I stand before you today. This journey has given me a deep appreciation for the dilemma that defines the *iTaukei* experience in this modern age. It is a dilemma that we must confront with honesty and courage. For far too long, we have been told that we are

¹ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 130/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure I.

resource-rich but cash-poor. This is a colonial fiction, and it is a perpetuation of an injustice that has plagued our people for generations.

Dr. Ponipate Rokolekutu put it best when he said, “the land may be ours in name, but not in law, not in use, and not in truth”. We are landowners who are dispossessed. We are resource owners who lack the financial benefit of the very resources we perceive to own. We are people with great wealth in our lands and our traditions. Yet, a people who struggle with poverty metrics and a disconnect from the modern economy.

To understand this dilemma, we must go back to the beginning. Our ancestors built a civilisation on the principle of kinship, co-operation, and a deep-seated principle woven into the fabric of our daily lives. Our villagers were not just places to live. They were moral economies. In these economies, as observed by Lorimer Fison in 1904, chiefs were custodians, not owners. Labour was shared, and dignity outweighed profit. Our commerce was built on trust, on the reciprocal obligations of the *iTaukei* system. It was a resilient and ethical framework that ensured no one was left behind.

Then came the colonial administrators. For their purposes of control, they reinforced a communal structure. But in doing so, they introduced an individualistic, cash-based economy and legal structures that, in their design, gradually eroded our communal logic. The introduction of laws like the Native Land Trust Act and the Mining Act gave us a title on paper but separated us from the true authority over our resources. This has fractured our delicate balance, leading to the mistrust, jealousy, and fragmentation we see today. The profound and sacred connection between land and people was disrupted, leaving us with a crisis of identity.

This crisis, Madam Speaker, is the most profound challenge we face. It is not just about economics. It is about who we are. So many of our people, from our elders in the village to our youth in cities, no longer know their traditional roles. They do not know which *mataqali* they belong to, and more critically, what that *mataqali* was historically responsible for. And these are just to name a few. The roles, their duties and their very names are as unique and diverse as our beautiful islands themselves. Was it *Turaga* - the Chief whose role was to lead, to protect and to guide? Was it the *Sauturaga* - the Kingmaker and advisor who helped guide the decisions of the chief? Was it the *Matanivanua* - the spokesperson, the diplomat who served as the bridge between the chief and the people? Was it the *Bete* - the priest or healer who connected the physical and spiritual worlds? Was it the *Bati* - the warriors who were the defenders of the *vanua*? Or was it the *Gonedau* - the master fishermen and resource managers who provided sustenance from the sea? Without this knowledge, we lose not only our history but also our direction and our purpose. We have a growing number of *iTaukei* who have never visited their ancestral village, who feel disconnected from the very soil and spirit that defines them.

Their mana, Madam Deputy Speaker, the disconnection creates a vacuum where identity should be. It is, and has been observed, a profound breakdown in our cultural mapping, where traditional roles were once passed down through ceremony and storytelling. It has been correctly noted, our culture is relational. Everyone has a role to play, but this role is changing, and that change do not augur well for the *iTaukei* community. This is a crisis that echoes in the concerns of our traditional leaders, who have raised alarm over the erosion of our traditional protocols. We have been told that we are poor, that we are failing, but I stand here today to tell you, we are not poor. We are mismatched. What Western economic models often fail to capture is the communal dignity, the wealth of our social bonds, the generosity of our sharing, and the richness of our heritage.

Why they label us as economic failure is often a direct result of dispossession, a colonial fiction that gave us ownership without authority. Someone living in the village connected to their

land and community is not poor in the true sense of the word. Their wealth is communal dignity, shared resources and social capital.

The honourable Prime Minister, in his recent response to the Budget Address, provided figures that show that *iTaukei* income is, indeed, in good standing, with hundreds of millions flowing in from land leases, royalties and remittances. Yet, the same data reveals that only 5 percent of this income is used for savings and investments. This reflects not a lack of resources, but a lack of strategic management and a system that has failed to channel this wealth into long-term prosperity.

It is time to be strategic in how we use our resources. As the honourable Prime Minister has said, the long-term prosperity, unity, and stability must not be sacrificed for short-term gains. What is the path forward? The path forward, I believe, is communal corporatisation. This is the fusion of our past and our future. We must establish *mataqali*, *yavusa* and *tikina* trust which clearly defined corporate arms. These corporate entities will be the engines of our economic progress, but they will be accountable to the communal trust, which will be custodians of our cultural values and social obligations.

This structure will allow us to engage in business, invest and build wealth without compromising the very communal bonds that define us. Crucially, this is about learning to run business and fulfil our social obligations in parallel, not in a confusing, detrimental mixture. The two must be kept separate and distinct, each with its own space to thrive. We need to look far from a living blueprint. Many of our provinces are showing what is possible when we blend ancestral logic with modern corporate structures. This is not just a theory; it is happening across our beautiful islands.

While communal corporatisation is a powerful vehicle, we must also remember that individual investment and commercial projects need more assistance. It is through supporting the dreams of our entrepreneurs, both big and small, that we will truly unlock the economic potential of the *iTaukei*.

The dual approach, strengthening communal trust while empowering individual enterprise, is the path to a confident, culturally grounded and prosperous Fiji. I ask you, our educated *iTaukei*, to lead this charge. You are the bridge. You are the one who can speak both the language of the *vanua*, the language of finance, law and technology. We must build trust, document our traditional roles and design systems that honour our heritage while securing our future. This is not just a speech but must be the beginning of a new era for a confident, culturally grounded and prosperous Fiji. We must go back before we move forward. It is time to go back to the source of our strength and communal bonds and use the strength to build a future of prosperity and dignity for all *iTaukei* and all Fijians.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, for the purpose of complying with Standing Orders with respect to sitting times, I now call upon the honourable Leader of Government in Parliament to move a Suspension Motion.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

That Standing Order 6, that so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 12.30 p.m. to complete the remaining items listed on today's Order Paper.

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

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Deputy Speaker, we have another End of Week Statement and, in addition, consideration of a Bill.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON END OF WEEK STATEMENTS

HON. I. VASU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable Koroilavesau for highlighting some of the shortfalls that need to be taken care of in regards to uplifting the lives of the *iTaukei*. We really appreciate what he has highlighted to us today. For the last 16 years, the GCC was not functional. In 2023, we brought in the GCC on the understanding that the *vanua* needs to be taken care of - the *iTaukei* to thrive in regards to the *vanua*, social obligations and other factors.

The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the Government have come together as a *solesolevaki*. In the last budget, the honourable Minister for Finance and Deputy Prime Minister has highlighted what has been given to the Ministry of iTaukei. What was given in the past years was not enough to taken care of the iTaukei with regards to developing their land, plans to develop their resources and educate them in regard to the *mataqali*, *yavusa* and the *vanua*. Now the GCC Chairman has come up with a plan to put together a training syllabus for our future leaders. That has been a drawback all along. He wants to make sure that our leaders are well educated so that they can lead their *yavusa*, their *mataqali* and their *tokatoka* in all levels of the Fijian hierarchy.

As we have already mentioned in a few speeches, the Ministry has put together *solesolevaki* on the understanding that we take care of our *tokatoka*, *mataqali* and *yavusa* in regards to their resources. We need to start small and that is what we are doing now. The iTaukei Trust Fund has already started visiting provinces in Fiji, taking care of communities that have resources; those that are into business ready by putting together the strategic plan and business plan as alluded to by honourable Koroilavesau.

In regard to Native Land Trust Board, in the past 84 years, we managed to influence our chiefs belief. A percentage of the lease money is being used as part of development to assist the *iTaukei* now and also for future generations. That has never happened, but it is happening now. When we sat together with the provincial councils and iTaukei people, one of the areas that has been hindering for them was finance. In whatever we do in Fiji today, it ends up with money. If you have money, you can do it. If you do not, then it is very hard.

We are fortunate that with *solesolevaki* there are some programmes already in place to help our *iTaukei*, our *tokatoka*, *mataqali* and *yavusa*. The only thing now is for us to come together and plan together then we can achieve some of the things that have been a drawback from previous years. The *Veitarogivanua* have done their part in going out to all the provinces and trying to install the various leaders. From slightly over 55 percent to now averaging about 70 percent. We try and put the leaders in their rightful place to look after their people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have just started advising our people that we will be looking at everyone, all communities in Fiji in terms of development and growth. We just started two years ago years and will keep on trying to help our people. We have gone through hard times, now we have HIV & AIDS, drugs, but we need to work together. It has been highlighted that there are some highly educated Fijians out there. Please do not go and type on the board, come and let us work together.

This is the time for us to work together. Make Fiji a better place to live for us now and our future generations.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I failed to announce that there are only three End of Week Statements as the honourable Leader of the Opposition has withdrawn his End of Week Statement, he was to be first. It is now 12.26 p.m., and I suggest we break for lunch, after which, we will hear from honourable Tuiwailevu and then I will be able to give my End of Week Statement.

The bell will ring at 2.30 p.m. and now, we break for lunch.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.27 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.31 p.m.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Breach of Standing Order and Practices of Parliament – Hon. A.A. Maharaj

MR. SPEAKER.- I thank Madam Deputy Speaker for indulging the Chair this morning.

Honourable Members, we will continue with Item No. 7 of the Order Paper, the End of Week Statements but before I do, I think it is important that I clarify further the Ruling of the Deputy Speaker this morning on honourable Maharaj's Point of Order on the place of the ministerial statements in the transaction order as permitted under Standing Order 34.

In honourable Maharaj's view, Standing Order 34(5) predicates that the Member's business takes top place or priority over any other, including government business on any Friday seating. Honourable Maharaj's stand reflects the views that were generally accepted by the Members as to the Friday sitting order of business.

In my opinion, which I had tabled with the Business Committee, I was firmly of the view that notwithstanding generally held consensus that the interpretation given precedence on Friday sitting to Members' business over all other businesses, including government business, is erroneous. I would like to read the short opinion of the Chair for the record of the House as before the Business Committee.

“Standing Order 34(5) states, and I quote:

Government business takes precedence over any other public business item except on a Friday sitting day, in which case Members' business takes precedence over any other public business item.”

It has generally been assumed and interpreted by the Business Committee Members that this provision gives Members' business precedence over any other public business item, including government business.

In my considered opinion, a careful analysis of the provision does not support the interpretation above. In the first place, the term “Government business” and “Members' business” are technical terms that are defined under Standing Order 34(6). Similarly, any other public business item is a third category of business and remains separate from the other two categories.

It is logical and an accepted rule of interpretation that unless stated otherwise, the categories remain as they are, that is, separate. In this instance, the phrase “except on a Friday sitting” in which Members' business takes precedence over any other public business item means exactly that, that is, that Members' business takes precedence over all public business items but does not include the first category, Government business, which remains separate from the other two. In other words, Government business is not any other public business item. If it was intended to include Government business to the frame, then the phrase under Section (5), would have read, and I quote:

“...except on a Friday sitting day, in which case Members' business takes precedence over Government, business and any other public business item.”

Members will note that it would have included then the Government business which has been referred to this morning. Members will note that under Standing Orders 34 (2) (a) the Business

Committee has the powers to reorder or reorganise the order of transaction of Parliamentary business as stipulated under the Standing Order 34 (1).

By this mechanism, the Business Committee can, for example, decide that the Members' business can take precedence over Government business on any particular Friday sitting. It has, however, I observe, be on a case-by-case basis. So the options was that the Business Committee can, if it agrees to refer the matter to the Standing Order Committee, to decide whether to amend Standing Orders 34 (5) to read, as I had had the chair had suggested, or leave the provisions as they are, but invoke the proviso set out under such Standing Order 34 (2) (a) whenever the needs arise.

The Committee, if it had agreed to option one, this recommendation was to go forward to the Standing Orders Committee, and I understand that is now being undertaken, and that is where the matter rests. Until and unless the honourable members of the Standing Committee clarify as suggested by the chair, Standing Order 34 (5), the Speaker's discretion under Standing Order 20 as alluded to by the Deputy Prime Minister, honourable Professor Biman, this morning applies.

Finally, honourable Maharaj was referring to the issue of the appropriateness of flying minutes sent by emails rather than the delivery of hard copies. I remind honourable members that each one of you have been given phones and computers for your official and private use, and your Parliament secretaries do not have the resources to deliver each one of you the hard copies of urgent parliamentary papers and we beg of you to please help us by using the facilities that are given to you to access those urgent matters that are required of you.

In any event, the flying minutes, which were referred to by honourable Maharaj, was circulated by email on Wednesday the 7th of August and were responded to as follows:

- Five positive;
- One negative; and
- Two no responses.

My office is open to any suggestion or recommendation from any of the honourable members that is intended to assist your Parliament Secretariat become more efficient in its service for you.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE END OF WEEK STATEMENTS

National Geographic Pristine Seas Study

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, good afternoon. The honourable Prime Minister, honourable Ministers, Assistant Ministers and Members of the House; I rise before this august House to provide an update on the National Geographic Pristine Seas Fiji Expedition.

Between 21st and 31st this year, I was privileged to join the National Geographic Pristine Seas Fiji Expedition on the research vessel the *Argo* during its Kadavu leg, living and working alongside local and overseas marine scientists, an Emmy-award-winning cinematographer, underwater photographers and the *Argo* crew. The Permanent Secretary for Environment and Climate Change, Dr. Sivendra Michael, joined us for the first week of the study. The Government of Fiji officially endorsed the execution of a MoU with the National Geographic's Pristine Seas initiative on 7th January this year.

What is the Pristine Seas Initiative? Launched in 2008 by the National Geographic Society Pristine Seas is a global conservation effort to explore, document and protect some of the world's last wild ocean places. It has helped establish over 30 marine reserves, covering nearly 6.9 million square

kilometres. The MOU sets the foundation for a long-term partnership between Fiji and Pristine Seas to support marine conservation, oceanographic research and climate impact monitoring within Fiji's waters.

Starting April 2025 and continuing until next month, Pristine Seas is carrying out a major expedition around Fiji and Rotuma, following an official invitation from the Government of Fiji and the Rotuma Council. With the partners, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Ministries of Fisheries and Forests, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and Blue Prosperity Fiji, the study areas include deep seas to shallow reefs, including Kadavu, the Great Astrolabe Reef, the Great Sea Reef, the Melanesian Border Plateau and Rotuma's volcanic waters by using the following methods and some more:

- (1) Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling;
- (2) Submersible dives;
- (3) Seabird counts, coral surveys, underwater imagery and filming.

However, the question also is, what are the deliverables or the outcomes for Fiji? – Scientific data sharing with Fijian institutions, including the Government, the USP, the two documentary films focusing on local stewardship in Kadavu and Rotuma and contributions to national marine spatial planning and ocean protection goals.

Climate resilience and biodiversity are central to Fiji's ocean policy, and our commitment to protecting 30 percent of our oceans by 2030. The Pristine Seas collaboration supports national marine spatial planning, traditional marine management, community awareness and educational outreach with local schools and villages.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, traversing Kadavu's waters has deepened my appreciation about just how crucial data and its clear translation are to sound policymaking. It was, for me and for many others involved, a journey of learning, connection and reflection. Kadavu is one of the most ecologically rich yet least studied regions in Fiji. The Fiji Government's partnership with National Geographic, Pristine Seas, Blue Prosperity Fiji and conservation partners, including Wildlife Conservation Society, the World Wide Fund for Nature and Conservation International and importantly, our local custodians, is vital.

The mission blended cutting-edge research with the wisdom of the *vanua*. The 10 days I spent on board the *Argo* was not a holiday, even though I took annual leave to join the ship. Everyone is expected to pitch in, so I joined the Baited Remote Underwater Video Systems (BRUVS) or BRUVS team. It is an underwater camera system used in marine biology research to study fish and other marine life. It uses bait to attract animals to the camera's field of view, allowing researchers to study species identification, abundance, and behaviour. The great thing about BRUVS is that it can be used in various environments, including areas beyond safe diving depths.

Our work every day involves getting the bait stations ready on board the *Argo*, and then using a rigid-hulled inflatable, we took the BRUVS to different areas of Kadavu waters, deploying them overboard so they can take videos of what passes in front of the two GoPros on each BRUV. Then we retrieve them after an hour or so and go and watch the footage. They revealed breathtaking snapshots of Kadavu's marine life, including tiger shark sightings. Tiger sharks are apex predators that signal a healthy food web.

We had daily encounters with humpback whales, encountered a grouper spawning aggregation and observed turtles, manta rays, dolphins, giant clams, and a multitude of other totemic and endemic species in Kadavu waters. It was quite remarkable witnessing Fiji's amazing natural

heritage.

Our work, however, was not limited to research. We visited villages, attended church services and sat with local custodians of coastal waters. We hosted primary school children, village elders and other community members to show them the tools of modern science and exchange knowledge and information on the marine environment. These engagements reaffirmed what we already knew – that the people of Kadavu are ready and eager to lead in protecting their ocean spaces. We must, therefore, as a Government, provide our indigenous people and local communities with the requisite support to better manage our rich natural heritage.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government of Fiji remains committed to managing 100 percent of our ocean and designating 30 percent as marine protected areas by 2030. Our partnerships with Pristine Seas and others are instrumental in realising this vision. As we gather new data, particularly from deep-water habitats, we can design and manage marine-protected areas that are ecologically meaningful, socially fair, and culturally grounded. I witnessed firsthand the contrast between protected areas and non-protected areas. The former was documented as having more species richness, healthier corals and higher numbers of food fish which spill over into adjacent areas.

This commitment is being implemented by respect for customary tenure and traditional stewardship. As well as the use of best available science that is complemented by traditional knowledge in marine spatial planning.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Locally Managed Marine Area (LMMA) model remains one of our proudest conservation successes. This approach has shown that when communities own the process, conservation becomes enduring and effective.

On 30th July, we were also presented with an opportunity to sail from Kadavu to Cuvu Bay, Nadroga, to engage with the Pacific Community's Science Teaching and Learning Summit, which brought together educators from 14 Pacific Island countries. The expedition supplied the real-world evidence, community voices, and cross-cultural collaboration that sought to ignite teachers' interest in ocean sciences and help them translate that excitement into classroom learning across the region. By inspiring educators, we invest in the next generation of ocean guardians.

True to National Geographic's legacy of transporting the wonders of nature, once delivered in brown-paper envelopes to eager children like me, many moons ago, Pristine Seas now enables the world to witness the wonders that flourish in our backyard.

I want to register my deepest appreciation to the captain and wonderful crew of the *R/V Argo* for their professionalism and hospitality. It would be remiss of me not to mention that this Kadavu expedition consisted, for the first time of an all-female leadership team; with expedition leader Kelly Moore, Jennifer Casselle - the science lead, and Tess Goldhagen - heading up the film-making unit. I would also like to mention Janice Taga, Jone Tamanitoakula and Andrew Paris, local Marine Ecologists, and Mike and Juan of the BRUVS team.

I thank the people of Kadavu for their warm hospitality and for allowing us to survey and document their rich marine diversity. *Vinaka saka vakalevu*, from this daughter of Kadavu.

I Nacolase, vua saka na Turaga na Tui Tavuki, I wish to acknowledge the people of Matasawalevu and Lagalevu, *i Nabala, vua saka na Turaga na Tui Nakasa*, the Tuisue family and the New Way International fellowship family in Lagalevu, *Vale Daidaiga vua saka na Turaga na Tui Yawe*, and the family of honourable Koroilavesau in the village of Nalotu.

And to my own home, Dravuni and Buliya, *i Natusara vua na Ramalo, na Tunidaunibokola*, my family, traditional custodians of Solo and the northern Astrolabe Reef, *vinaka saka vakalevu na veiciqomi*.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this voyage stands as proof of what we in Fiji can accomplish when our government, communities and global institutions work as one. We must recognise that a healthy ocean is vital to the prosperity of all Fijians.

MR. SPEAKER.- I thank the honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua for her End of the Week Statement. I now call on the Minister for Fisheries and Forestry, the honourable Alitia Bainivalu for her response.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, my fellow Fijians and all those who are watching this parliamentary session live. *Ni sa yadra vinaka*, and a very good afternoon to you all.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to provide my support for the third leg of the National Geographic's Pristine Seas Study in Kadavu Waters. Like many small island developing states, Fiji is not alone in facing the increasing pressures and challenges faced on its marine ecosystems. Extreme phenomena like climate change, coral bleaching through to overfishing have made an impact on the ecosystems.

Fiji has long demonstrated its leadership in addressing these challenges by making the most informed management decisions, grounded on the best scientific advice, reinforced by traditional knowledge, and balanced around the needs of the people of Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, whether science is lacking, it utilises the precautionary measures to mitigate and adapt to the changes while the science is being developed. Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the first quarter of this year, Cabinet had endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Geographic Pristine Seas with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and the Ministry of Fisheries and Forests. This expedition stems from the MOU and reinforces the Ministry of Fisheries' support to this Oceans protection efforts and bolsters the collaborative partnership between the Ministry of Fisheries and Forests, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the Blue Prosperity Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this MoU supported the elements of partnerships around the concepts of:

- (1) Collaboration that would be engaged with the Blue Prosperity Fiji, the National Geographic Pristine Seas and the relevant ministries.
- (2) Scientific research, where the scientific expeditions on various environmental formations were assessed as an indicator of health in Fiji's Waters. These would allow for the mapping of habitats and coral reef systems, providing indicators for species richness and ecological connectivity.
- (3) Also involve community engagement as part of the scientific research process, and would incorporate elements of traditional knowledge in collaboration with local scientists' knowledge base.
- (4) It also provides documentary films that would showcase Fiji's unique ocean makeup and the findings of the expedition.
- (5) Knowledge sharing, as a key element that would support further scientific research into Fiji waters, in addition to the provision of vital information conducive to the decision-

making processes on ecosystem recovery, conservation and sustainable management of our marine environment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this expedition builds on the recent endeavour around the island of Rotuma by the designated research vessel under the National Geographic's Pristine Seas expedition, the *Argo*. This expedition, much like that which was conducted in Kadavu in this 3rd leg, as elaborated on by the honourable Qereqeretabua, conducted sea surveys noting various marine mammals, deep-sea biodiversity structures like sea mounts and their associated organisms.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these expeditions utilised unmanned deep-sea cameras, a human-occupied submersible and indicators such as Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling methods; to identify species on and around the great astrolabe reef which surrounds the island.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these expeditions, much like the National Geographic's 3rd leg to Kadavu waters, will provide a different paradigm to the current data set being collected in Fiji. It will ensure that the data gaps needed to manage the relevant elements on the preservation of our pristine deep-sea environment, are addressed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the next phase is to address the concept of Marine Spatial Planning (MSP). This vital step will utilise the data sets collected from such expeditions coupled with the on-site reports that are being facilitated by the Ministry in collaboration with the Blue Prosperity Fiji at the provincial levels, to ensure that a comprehensive management plan is developed towards the protection of Fiji's coastal and offshore marine spaces.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, whilst it goes without saying, the ministry will do its part in collaborating with these partners, consultation with customary fishing rights owners, resource users and relevant stakeholders, to ensure that the Marine Species Planning is not only science-based but is conducive to the users of our ocean spaces and more so, the nations development aspirations.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, where necessary, under the Ministry's legislations, there will be a separation of the marine areas that shall be placed under marine protected areas and or marine managed areas; both of which will take into account the end-user needs through consultation and the longevity of the resource as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we press forward during these exciting times in scientific discovery, breaking new ground into international instruments such as the BBNJ instrument and what it entails in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change and the need to preserve biodiversity and the like. It is imperative that Fiji continues to develop policies and legislation that are conducive to Fiji's development aspirations and, more so, to hold its ground on self-determination as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), on the elements of conservation and sustainable management.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I take my seat, I would like to wish all schools that have qualified for the Fiji Secondary School rugby quarter finals in Nadi tomorrow, all the very best. Special mention to the Queen Victoria Schools (QVS) rugby teams to the team coaches and team managers, all the very best for tomorrow's game.

The Impact of Drug Use and HIV Transmission in Communities

HON. I. TUIWAILEVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Deputy Prime Ministers, the honourable Cabinet and Assistant Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Members of Parliament, members of the public in the gallery and those tuning in via television; as we conclude another week of this month's Parliamentary sitting, I rise to address a

matter of grave concern – the impact of drugs and HIV transmission within our *vanua*, especially amongst our indigenous communities.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because this issue is crucial to our local communities, I respectfully seek your permission to address the House also in the vernacular for a clear understanding for our rural audience who may be tuning in via radio, television or internet.

Nai tuvaki ni leqa – ena vica na yabaki sa oti, e laurai ni tubu vakasivia na kedrai wiliwili e tauvi ira na mate ni veiyacovi HIV & AIDS. Ena loma ga ni dua na yabaki, e sivia na dua na udolu na kisi vovou ni mate ca ni veiyacovi HIV, oqori e vakatolutaki ena levu ni wiliwili e laurai ena yabaki sa oti. Sa yacova na 6,000 na lewenivanua era sa bula vata tiko na HIV ena gauna ogo, ka vakavuna me vakaduria kina na Matanitu e dua na HIV Response Plan, ka ra saumi taro tiko kina na turaga Minisita ni Bula ena nodra taro nai vukevuke ni Minisita ni Veitaqomaki ena sigalevu nikua, ogo me vukea na kena valuti na leqa ka ra liutaka tiko na turaga na Minisita ni Bula.

Na kenai karua, na vakadewataki ni HIV se na vakayagataki ni cula ni waigaga, drug induce HIV transmission. Turaga na Sipika, e tubu vakasivia na mate ca ni veiyacovi se na HIV ena kena vakayagataki nai cula. E vakabauti ni sivia e veimama na kisi vovou ni HIV e takavi ira yani ena kena vakayagataki nai cula. Nai valavala ni veitakavi ogo e kilai me bluetoothing, e culai kina na tamata me veiwaseitaka na dra ka sa curuma oti tu na waigaga ni veivakamatenitaki se na methamphetamine se ice ka mera mateni talega kina na kena vo ni cauravou kei na goneyalewa, lai vakavuna me takalevu yani kina na mate dewa na HIV. E sau lailai na bluetoothing. Na nodra cula ka vakadewataka na dra esa culai rawa tu kina na waigaga mai na nodrai voli yadua nai cula ka culai ira kina. Na kauwai ogo e sa sega ni yalani ga ena veikoro lelevu me vakataki Suva. Ia, esa yaco talega yani ena veitikotiko ena taudaku ni koro lelevu, ena veivanuynu ka ra sa vakaleqai tiko kina na nodai tabagone iTaukei, nai sausau vou ni noda vanua.

O cei e vakaleqai vakalevu? Turaga na Sipika, e da raica ni ra sa vakaleqai sara vakalevu na nodai tabagone. Nai wiliwili levu duadua ni kisi e yacovi ira tiko mai na yabaki 18 ki na yabaki 34, ka bau laurai talega e vica na kisi vei ira na gone dramidrami. E dau kilai tu na noda veikoro vakaviti na vanua ni bula sautu, na vanua ni veivakaturagataki, na vanua ni solesolevaki, ia e ka ni rarawa, ni sa bau mai vakilai talega na revurevu ni waigaga kei na mate ca ni veiyacovi ena gauna ogo.

Ogo e dua nai vakatatao ni veivakatoroicaketaki ena loma ni vanua ka vakacacana na bula yadua, na vuvale, nai gu ni toso kei na veiwekani. Sa tubu tikoga na kedrai wiliwili ka vakadewataka tiko mai na macala ni vakadidike ka vakayacori ena veiyasana, sa mai vakayavalati kina na yavu kei nai nuinui ni noda vanua vakaturaga.

Turaga na Sipika, e vica na bolebole lelevu e sotavi tiko ogo:

- *E davo tiko o Viti enai tatakoso ni Pasivika, na vanua e takosovi tiko kina na veimataqali waigaga ka ra veikauyaki tiko ena veimatanitu lelevu. Era usa mai macawa ena waqavuka ka sala wai talega mai ena yota;*
- *E da raica na kena usani mai na waigaga e Viti mai vanua tani, ka ra vakaitavi saraga kina vakalevu na dau caka bisinisi e Viti, ka ra vulagi ka ra sa rawati ira vakavinaka tu mei kuri ni nodrai vurevure ni lavo. Ogo e rawa ni da vakatoka me yalo kocokoco. Eda rawa ni vakatoka talega e dua nai vadi ca era taketetaki kina ka vakawabokotaki kina o ira na nodai nuinui ena bula ni veisosomitaki kei na veivakatorocaketaki ena noda vanua - oya o ira na nodai tabagone iTaukei.*

Na leqa levu talega ni sa curu botea na veitabana vakamatanitu kei na private sector na cakacaka butobuto ni kena tutaki, ka vakadewataki kei na kena tokoni na bisinisi ni waigaga. Au kerea vakabibi Turaga na Sipika, me caka talega na kena veivaqai. E sega ni rawa ni tarovi rawa na kena dewa na waigaga ni veivakamatenitaki ka laki vakavuna tiko me taka vakalevu kina na mateca ni veiyacovi se HIV ke ra sega ni vesu ka veilewaitaki o ira na dau caka bisinisi ka ra volia ka vakadewataka tiko mai vanuatani ki Viti na waigaga. Me ra tamusuki mada iliu o ira ogo.

Sa bibi kina na nodratou yadrayadravaki na Mataivalu i Wai kei na Tabana ni Kasitaba. Era sega ni guta tiko vakadoudou na noda lewenivanua me ra lai vakadikevi ena HIV Clinics ena vuku ni madua kei na rai levu ni tamata tabu saka yani.

Revurevu ena Vanua kei na iTaukei: Esa sega walega ni kauwai ni Tabana ni Bula, ogo me baleta ni sa kune leqa kina na matavuvale, yali kina na bula ka ra vakaloloma na i solisoli. E luluqa kina na bula vakailavo ni matanitu, ra dusi na tauvimate ka vakamalumulumutaki na noda tiko vakaveiwekani. Ke sega ni wali me vaqacotaki na noda yadrayadravaki, ena yali kina vakadua na veika e maroroi kina na noda vanua, ni sana sikabotea mai na waigaga kei na mate dewa ni veiyacovi. . Ia, e se koto ga nai nuinui ni na vakayacoka tiko na Kalou ena noda vanua, matanitu kei na lotu, na veisoqosoqo ena taudaku ni matanitu ni na vueti o Viti mai na leqa levu ogo.

Sala ni kena wali: Ena kena taqomaki na noda vanua, sa yaga me da yadrayadravaki. Me liutaka na Tabana ni Bula, ia me da veitokoni taucoko sara na kena valuti. Me tomani saka tiko ga na nodra vakararamataki na noda itabagone era tu ena vanua kei ira na noda gonevuli ena vei koronivuli lelevu.

Turaga na Sipika, sa yaga talega me da veisautaka na noda rai ena nodra laurai na wekada era sa bula vata tu na HIV. Me kua ni yali na noda loloma, me ra ciqomi tikoga. Ena tikina ogo, me tomani tikoga na nodra vakacokotaki tale na luveda era koko tu ena waigaga ni veivakamatenitaki. Sa ra vakauqeti tiko na veiliutaki vakavanua, na lotu mera navuca na nodra ituvatuva ni yadrayadravaki ena noda veitikitiko, me vukea na ituvatuva levu ni Matanitu, ka me laurai kina na vuku vakavanua kei na kilaka vakaitaukei.

Me'u tinia, Turaga na Sipika, na tete ni waigaga kei na mateca ni veiyacovi esa koko ka yavalata na yavu ni noda matanitu, na nodra bula nai tabagone, noda itovo kei nai nuinui ni noda vanua ena veisiga ni mataka. Ke da wele voli ga, ia esa da na rusa vata kaya. Sa bibi kina na noda solesolevaki ena cakacaka bibi ogo ni vakabula vanua ena kena valuti na waigaga, vakalailaitaki na matedewa ni veiyacovi me vakalesua mai na bula vinaka, na bula sautu me bula ko Viti kei ira na noda kawa tamata. Ena rawa saka ga ke da duavata ena cakacaka bibi ogo, enai tosotoso ni nodra vakabulai na noda kei na tagutuvi na vu ni tatao ni noda sasagataka na bula sautu me rawati kina na Viti vinaka, ka Viti bulabula ena veisiga ni mataka.

[There is also the serious issue of corruption and collusion within government agencies and the private sector, enabling the smuggling and drug trade to flourish. The continued transmission of methamphetamine and the resultant rise in HIV&AIDS will not stop unless the drug traders and traffickers – who import and distribute these harmful substances are arrested and brought to justice. They must be targeted and dealt with first.

There is a critical need for vigilance and surveillance by our naval forces and customs authorities. Many of our people are still reluctant to get tested at HIV clinics due to shame and stigma association with the disease.

Impacts on land and iTaukei Communities: This is not just a concern for the Ministry of Health – it has become a family crisis, causing death and the erosion of traditional gifts and

resources.

It is also placing a burden on the nation's economy, increasing the number of people who are ill and weakening social relations. If left unresolved and without greater weaknesses, we risk completely, losing the moral and spiritual fabric of our land, which is now being threatened by drugs and HIV. However, our hope remains in God, the Government, the church and all NGOs to rescue Fiji from crisis.

What must we do? To protect our land, vigilance is key. While the Ministry of Health leads the response, it must be a collective effort to combat the problem. We must continue to educate and raise awareness among our youth in rural areas and school children in our urban schools.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we must also change our attitude towards those living with HIV. Let us not withhold love and acceptance from them. Efforts must also be continuing to rehabilitate our children who are caught in methamphetamine use.

Our traditional and religious leaders are being encouraged to develop local safeguarding strategies to complement government efforts – showcasing indigenous wisdom and *itaukei* knowledge.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the threat of drug use and HIV is now shaking the very foundation of our nation – affecting the lives of our youth, our values and our hope for the future. If we continue to turn a blind eye, we will fall together. That is why we must act together in this noble task to saving our land by combating drug abuse, reducing HIV transmission, and restoring wellbeing and peace so Fiji and our future generations can thrive. Only unity in this mission will lead to the healing of our people and the dismantling of what is threatening our collective dream of a prosperous and healthy Fiji.]

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank honourable Tuiwailevu for his End of Week Statement and I wish to make a brief response.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we all know, the current data shows that there is an outbreak of HIV, and amongst the outbreak, 90 percent of those who are infected with HIV are from the *iTaukei* community. The age group in terms of the demographics, as alluded to by honourable Tuiwailevu, is more common in the age group of 15 years to 35 years.

In terms of the location, most are in the Central Division, then following the Western Division and the Northern Division, and some even in the Eastern Division. I want to thank honourable Tuiwailevu for bringing this very important issue and I would like to make a few pointers.

First and foremost, the drug issue in Fiji, is within all facets of the society. Therefore, it is not about eradicating it, our work right now is about trying to contain it and minimise the effects of drug use in Fiji. To say that it is within all facets of society, where there is a demand, there will always be a supply availability. With that being said, we have a role to play in terms of trying to contain and minimise the effects of drug use and the transmission of HIV. As such, we are guided by the National Narcotics Strategy, through which the Ministry of Health plays a very important part in harm reduction.

We are grateful that the strategy involves a multi-sectoral approach in which involves all other Government agencies, NGOs and CSOs, because the fight against drugs and HIV is not only left to the responsibility of the Police and the Ministry of Health, but it is left with the responsibility

of the nation as a whole.

In terms of the plan that I have responded to earlier on, part of the plan is to include a more standardised information in which information is shared through the important stakeholders, such as faith-based organisations and our *iTaukei* community. Those standardised information will be available soon and we will involve the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs to ensure that this standardised message is passed down to the grassroots level in terms of awareness and passing on the right information, because the wrong information going right down, and its intention can clearly cause more harm than good. Therefore, we as a Ministry, will be guided by the plan, and our role in the strategy of harm reduction is our main aim.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to round off my short contribution this afternoon, I would like to reiterate, that drugs is now part of our society, and how are we going to tackle this, is through working together. We cannot leave this up to the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Policing alone. It should involve a whole of Government approach and all of society approach in order to tackle the issue of drugs, because it is affecting our young and our future.

It is affecting the *iTaukei* community and also if we do not do this now, the data shows that in the next four to five years we will be having approximately close to 30,000 new cases of HIV and also in terms of the drugs and the drug related issues that comes with it; it will be even more. We will not be having a very productive population but rather a very sickly one and it is something that we should nip it at the bud right now and try to work together to follow the plan, follow the strategy that is at hand and work together to bring and control this issue as we speak right now.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must commend and thank honourable Tuiwailevu for his End of Week Statement. I look forward to ongoing discussions in terms of what we will be doing now and into the future in terms of containing the drug issue and tackling HIV in Fiji.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2025

HON. A.D. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 85(1), I move:

That the Employment Relations (Amendment) Bill 2025 be now read a second time.

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

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members before I invite the mover of the motion to speak, I remind the honourable Members that, in accordance with Standing Order 85(1), the debate will focus only on the principles and merits of the Bill.

HON. A.D. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I go on to the motion itself, I would like to join honourable Maharaj in paying tribute to the late Mr. Yogeshwar Singh, who was a family friend and a colleague. We had worked together in the Nausori Town Council as well as with Rewa Football and then later on with Fiji Football; a man who had his heart for soccer, for football, and he spent many years of his life working towards improving soccer in Fiji. He was the current Vice President when he passed away. I offer my condolences to the family, Mrs. Singh and the children and I also pray to the Almighty that his soul rests in eternal peace in the heavenly abode.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Deputy Prime Ministers, honourable Ministers, honourable Assistant Ministers, honourable Members of Parliament, fellow Fijians. It is my honour to present the Employment Relations (Amendment) Bill, 2025, a landmark piece of legislation that reflects the Coalition Government's commitment to fostering a fair, inclusive

and productive labour market. This Bill represents the culmination of years of collaborative effort grounded in social dialogue and aligned with international labour standards.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Employment Relations Act 2007 marked a significant milestone in Fiji's labour law history, consolidating various employment related laws into a single framework. I was a Member of Parliament and part of the Sector Committee that took the Bill through the process then. I was also part of the tripartite delegation to the 2008 International Labour Conference, as the workers representative and we presented a copy of the Act to the then Director-General who was very pleased to receive it. Unfortunately, that Parliament was short-lived because of the 2006 upheaval.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as a proud member of the International Labour Organization, Fiji ratified 39 conventions which include fundamental, core and technical conventions. These ratifications signify our nation's dedication to upholding the principles of social justice, fair labour practices and workers' rights. The Employment Relations Act 2007 incorporated the fundamental principles and rights of these conventions to ensure social justice and protection for all. The ratification of an ILO Convention is recognition by a State that it is a legally binding instrument, and Fiji is committed to implementing ratified ILO Conventions in law and in practice.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Tripartite Consultation Convention No. 144 of 1976 underscores the importance of dialogue among the Government, employers and workers in shaping labour laws, which includes the amendment and employment legislation in line with ILO Conventions. Since the Act came into force in 2008, it has undergone 11 legislative amendments, most of them done unilaterally to curtail the fundamental rights of workers and workers' organisations. In common language, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was union-busting at its worst. For the first time in the history of independent Fiji, it will be remembered as the darkest era for workers and union leaders.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, over the past 15 years, the Act has been the focus of considerable Government, social partner and ILO interests because of the amendments to the Act from 2011 onwards by the previous regime which did not comply with the fundamental ILO Conventions including the:

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention No. 87 of 1948;
- The Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention No. 98 of 1949; and
- The Abolition of Forced Labour Convention No. 105 of 1957.

An example of the legislative change that drew widespread criticism was the Employment Relations Amendment Act 2015, which repealed the 2007 version of Part 19 of the Act regarding the protection of essential services, life and property and replaced it with a new Part 19. Some concerns raised by the Committee of Experts to Part 19 provisions of the Act which were amended in 2015, were addressed in 2016 due to the fear of the ILO instituting a Commission of Inquiry.

Notably, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in 2023, as soon as we assumed office, we rectified issues related to the Essential Services List reverting to the original list in Schedule 7 as per ERA 2007. Mr. Speaker, Sir, in June 2019, the ILO Committee on Standards at the 108th session of the ILC, adopted resolutions regarding the application of Convention No. 87, which it requested the Government of Fiji to accept a direct contact mission.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the case committee observed serious allegations concerning the violation of basic civil liberties, including arrests, detentions, assaults and restrictions on freedom of association and noted with regret the Government of Fiji's failure to complete the process under the 2016 Joint Implementation Report, which was signed in Geneva.

The Committee further called upon the Government to refrain from interfering in the designation of the representation of the social partners on tripartite bodies. To reconvene the era without delay to start a legislative reform process and complete it without further delay, as agreed. In the International Labour Conference in 2022, the ILO expressed great concerns about the Fiji government's repeated failure to bring its national legislative framework into conformity with the Fundamental Conventions, including Convention No. 105, and so as to allow trade unions to exercise their rights to free assembly and free speech without the threat of penal sanctions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Coalition Government honoured the commitment to workers and employers, and in early 2023, the Employment Relations Advisory Board was reconstituted after a significant break, and the process of social dialogue to amend the Act commenced from 29th April to 1st May, 1924. The ILO Direct Contact Mission visited Fiji at the invitation of the government concerning the application of Convention No. 87, and recognised the progress made in reviewing the Act to bring legislative reform to a successful completion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the primary legislative intentions for amending the principal Act include:

- To ensure that human rights as set out in the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji are protected, respected and fulfilled. These human rights include the right to fair employment practices, including humane treatment and proper working conditions, the right to freedom of association, the right to work and to earn a just minimum wage, and the right of children to be protected from inter alia hazardous and exploitative labour.
- To protect vulnerable groups of workers in Fiji, which include migrant workers, domestic workers, seafarers, fishers and workers in the industries that are prone to exploitation, including the security sector, retail sector and the maritime sector.
- To take into consideration gender inclusivity, including disability and sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, and rights-based transformation, the Bill introduces new kinds of leave specific to women, including menstrual leave and miscarriage leave, new provisions relating to harassment in the workplace and widens anti-discrimination provisions.
- To recognise the important role of the private sector and employers in Fiji in creating jobs, generating income and driving the economic growth of Fiji.
- To bring the Act in compliance with ILO Conventions ratified by Fiji.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Bill is the result of an extensive and truly inclusive process where consultations were held with employers, workers, civil society and international partners. The Bill reflects a balanced approach, carefully considering the need for both businesses and workers to ensure Fiji's labour laws remain modern, equitable and aligned with international best practices.

The Bill represents a consensus that balances the interests of workers and employers, and some of the key provisions in the Bill include:

- (1) The Bill introduces stronger safeguards for migrant workers, seafarers, domestic workers and children, ensuring their rights are upheld and their working conditions are safe and fair. Measures to combat child labour and wage theft have been reinforced with penalties designed to deter violations, while allowing for corrective action.

- (2) Recognising the unique challenges faced by women in the workforce, the Bill grants menstrual leave for severe pain and compassionate leave for miscarriage. It also mandates safe working conditions for pregnant and nursing mothers, ensuring their health and livelihoods are protected.
- (3) Supporting workers and unions, the Bill guarantees voluntary union membership and strengthens collective bargaining rights, fostering a collaborative environment where workers and employers can engage in constructive dialogue. These changes are designed to empower unions while maintaining stability in the workplace.
- (4) The efficient dispute resolution to address delays in resolving wage claims. The Bill streamlines tribunal processes and enhances the role of labour inspectors.
- (5) The Bill introduces proportionate penalties for serious violations such as wage theft and forced labour, while ensuring that inadvertent breaches by small businesses are addressed through education and support rather than undue punishment.
- (6) Recognising the critical nature of essential services, the Bill maintains a balanced approach to strikes, ensuring they are lawful and rare while safeguarding public safety. Police and corrections officers will return, retain their right to raise grievances, but remain excluded from strike action to preserve order.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Bill is not about placing an undue burden on employers or workers. It is about fostering a culture of mutual respect and shared responsibility. Ambiguous terms like harassment and justified reasons for termination have been clarified to prevent misuse, ensuring fairness in disciplinary actions.

To the employers, this Bill is designed to support compliance and reward good practices, recognising the vital role businesses play in Fiji's prosperity. To the workers, this Bill reaffirms your rights and dignity, ensuring your contributions are valued and protected.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Bill presents an opportunity for Fiji to set a positive example, one where economic growth and workers' rights go hand in hand. It is a testament to what we can achieve when we work together, in the spirit of co-operation and shared purpose.

I urge this House, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to support this Employment Relations (Amendment) Bill, 2025, as it reflects our collective commitment to building a fairer, stronger and more inclusive Fiji.

MR. SPEAKER. - The floor is now open for debate on the motion. Honourable Members, I have a list of speakers and I first invite the honourable Parveen Bala.

HON. P.K. BALA. - Mr. Speaker, Sir, there has been some understanding that one from the Opposition and one from Government.

MR. SPEAKER. - I am not with you. You are the first on the list of speakers on my list. Well, I will change it now. Right. And you are asking for honourable Koya. Are you in agreement honourable Koya?

HON. F.S. KOYA. - If I may just explain, there is a lot of sign language that went across, and we suddenly decided that one speaker from that side, one speaker on this side. I will speak on our behalf.

MR. SPEAKER. - Yes.

HON. F.S. KOYA. - Just for clarity's sake.

MR. SPEAKER. - Please proceed honourable Koya.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- As a matter of fact, I will be quite brief because I know this is going through the normal process in terms of going to the committee, et cetera. Before I even commence, there is an issue that needs to be raised, and I think maybe the Solicitor-General's Office needs to look at this. This is a Bill, in its entirety, it has 142 amendments.

So, practically speaking, it would have been a better course to repeal the first Bill and amalgamate the portions from the Bill and put it into this one and bring it in as a new Bill, which would have been the absolute better course to do it. We have 142 amendments.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for whichever Committee this goes to – I am sure you will appreciate this as a lawyer also – you are going to go through this with a fine-tooth comb, back and forth, back and forth and to do this. I hope it is not too late to do that. We look forward to the new Act. I hope, maybe somehow or the other, this can be done, but it is in front of us. I am sure the legal minds here would agree with me when I say that it is a phenomenal task to go through.

A substantial amount of work is being carried out on this, and we understand that. I also understand that there are opinions from reputable institutions, like the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC) and the Employers Federation. They are saying they still want more input on it. I think they are looking forward to the Committee stage to make some more submissions, because they still have issues with harsh penalties that are there, the Labour officers given excessive power, unclear wage theft rules and changes to strike rights and collective agreements.

This is a very important legislation. I am very happy that it is going through the normal process of Parliament through the Committee stage and the consultations that are required. I am hoping that this goes before a committee that is sufficiently empowered to deal with this, to bring it back in its form. I know a lot of work may happen with respect to the Committees and the Office of the Solicitor-General in drafting, redrafting, et cetera. It is not something that is going to come back very quickly. I plead with the honourable Minister to repeal, bring it back in the form of an amalgamated.

In terms of the content, as I said, Sir, it is quite voluminous for us to have even digested it in one night with all the other stuff that we had to do. It is quite impossible to do. The comments that will come with respect to what is in it, will probably be best at a later stage from our side. There are issues that we have that will probably be vetted after we have had consultation exercises with the necessary institutions.

I commend the honourable Minister for having gone through quite a massive consultation process with it. Some may have been missed, but that is what the Committee stage is for. Again, I plead with the honourable Minister to please rethink how we are doing it. Maybe the honourable Prime Minister can intervene to see how we can do this in a better and an efficient manner.

That is all from us for the time being in terms of the merits of what is in there. I could stand here for hours for all of that. There is a lot to cover but for us, that is pretty much where we are, at the moment, with it. If it is going to go through the normal course, that is fine. It has to go to a committee. I am hoping that it comes to the Standing Committee of Justice, Law and Human Rights so that we can deal with it properly.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I intend to be very brief. I know honourable Bala wants to get back to Ba. He is very happy with the new Govind Park.

(Laughter)

As the honourable Minister and honourable Koya said, this a very important legislation. You have quite rightly said, the principles and the merits of the legislation have been adequately highlighted by the honourable Minister for Employment. This legislation, as a matter of principle and merit, also underlines the provisions in the National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050. It talks about population, employment, labour market best practices, modernising our economy, our labour market, so in that respect, this legislation is an important one and one that merits careful consideration by this Parliament and through the appropriate committees.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we used to raise this issue about employment relations, the legislations and our commitment to International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions that Fiji has ratified. There was there was quite a bit of debate, sometimes very heated debate, about the legislation governing not only trade unions, but the whole industrial relations environment and climate in this country.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, there is no ideal legislation. Legislations are meant to be reviewed with changing conditions, changing circumstances in any economy, and there will always be people, sectors of the economy and stakeholders that may not agree with various versions of any legislation.

From the employers' perspective, things like clear hiring, contract rules, probation period, flexibility, termination, control over conditions, disciplinary process, collective bargaining process, are very, very important principles and issues that employers are always concerned with.

Challenges for employers include procedural requirements, compliance to minimum wages, leave entitlements, union involvement and the overall compliance process. If you look at micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), there are always challenges that employers have with the compliance of any employment legislation, so I just wanted to highlight that.

From the employees' perspective, written contracts, clarity over wages, leave conditions, minimum wages, leave entitlements - you know you can talk about any kind of leave, annual leave, sick leave, bereavement leave, family care leave, maternity leave, et cetera. These are always perspectives that employees will bring to any kind of discussion for any legislation. Therefore, the principle behind these requirements is very, very important from their perspective. Others include job security, protection from discrimination. These things, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you know very well, end up through various processes, including ending up in courts and other places.

From the employers' perspective, other rights include rights of union leaders, health and safety, and the overall grievance mechanisms that employees can use, so this is a very clear perspective from the employees.

The challenges that employees have, unions have, union leaders have, the challenge that they face in the midst of any legislation is the enforcement gap. They always want governments to ensure that there is good legislation to ensure enforcement on things like their concern about limited bargaining power, retaliation risks, et cetera. In the end, Mr. Speaker, the perspectives of the employers and the employees comes to a point where we talk about balance and balance in a cooperative labour relations environment in the country.

All these, Mr. Speaker, Sir, depends on an appropriate legislation, and even with the legislation itself, I know the workers will not be very happy with aspects of it. I know, already the

union leaders are not very happy, the employers will not be very happy on various aspects, but what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is the principles that I outlined in terms of the perspective of the employers, perspective of the employees, we need to find a balance. I want to assure the employers, I know there have been statements made, and I know the unions will also come out with it but we have to ensure that even though we have signed or ratified Conventions, and looked at various legislations, when we come back to Parliament to debate the final legislation, there will be broad consensus, broad and balanced view about what will bring about that balance and industrial relations environment in the country because that is important for us as an economy - building investor confidence and making sure that we raise productivity levels.

I want to say this, in fairness to the employers, if you look at the productivity, if you look at the anecdotal evidence and what is there even at the moment - worker absenteeism, people not just coming up to work, et cetera. We have experienced that in the Civil Service.

I think the issue of productivity is very important. It is incumbent not only on the employers, but it is also incumbent upon the unions, union leaders to impress upon the members so that in the end, we have this cooperative, balanced legislation which ensures compliance, ensures that we are able to move forward as an economy, as a country, in a in a much more respectable and in a flexible way as well.

I support the second reading, and I look forward to the work of the Committee and the consultations that will take place. And I urge the employers' representatives to use that opportunity to also ensure that their perspective on this revised legislation, and I know a number of consultations have been held, but this provides another opportunity for everyone to have a second chance, or the third chance or the fourth chance, to explain their perspectives.

HON. A.D. SINGH.-Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the two speakers - honourable Koya and the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics.

Honourable Koya alluded to the amendments being so large and voluminous. We know that, but we have been through the whole exercise with the Office of the Solicitor-General and with the specialist drafters provided by the ILO, and we are confident that we have all done a good job with it. I am sure when it goes to the Sector Committee, there will be more work for us.

I just want to briefly allude to the consultations that took place, Mr. Speaker, Sir. We initiated the engagement in 2023-2024. The tripartite meetings were held on numerous occasions and after the Employment Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) was reconstituted to address contentious Clauses, while ILO provided the technical expertise from November 23rd to December 24th, the Fiji Employers Federation and the Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC) also submitted their comments on the matrix.

We had the ERAB roundtable meetings with FTUC and Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF), and Government finalised the tripartite positions with the ILO as well.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the nationwide consultation sessions were held from 8th to 17th of January, 2025, which gathered considerable amount of feedback from workers, employers and the public, over 700 people participated in the actual consultation gatherings. The social partners, including the members of the public, were given a further opportunity to make written submissions and over 80 written submissions were also received, Mr. Speaker, and due consideration has been given to those concerns that were raised.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we also had separate consultations - further sessions with FTUC and FCEF. We are satisfied that we had adequate consultations with all the stakeholders.

Having said that, I must also agree with the honourable Deputy Prime Minister that employers and workers will never agree 100 percent - there will always be differences, so that is how we do it. We consult with the workers, we consult with the employers, we bring them together, we tick off all the consensus matters, and the balance that is left is Government's call and when Government makes a call, we ensure that it is balanced, and that is how we have done it.

The final bite of the cherry, they will still have another chance - the social partners, when it goes to the Standing committee. We hope that when we come back to Parliament later on, the next session, hopefully, we will be able to enact the law.

With those few words, once again, I wish to thank the honourable Attorney-General and his team in the Solicitor-General's Office, and the entire team in my own Ministry, for all the work that has been done. I would like to thank the FCEF, as well as the FTUC, and all other stakeholders that contributed to the consultation process.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

[Employment Relations (Amendment) Bill 2025 (Bill No. 27/2025) committed and referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs]

ADJOURNMENT

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

That Parliament adjourns until Monday, 29th September, 2025 at 9.30 a.m.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that concludes the end of our August sitting and I thank all of you for your contributions throughout this week. I now declare Parliament adjourned until Monday, 29th September, 2025, at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 3.50 p.m.

ANNEXURE I

**Reply to Written Question No. 130/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education
(Ref. Page 1719)**



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

Reply to Question No. 130/2025 by Honourable H. Chand, is as follows:

Pre-Primary/Kindergarten (ECE)

Establishing new kindergartens/pre-primary centres for eligible 5-year-olds is a collaborative partnership with communities and this is essential for fostering educational equity, supporting child development and promoting long term economic benefits. It is a vital step forward ensuring all children have the best possible start in their education journey.

According to Sustainable Development Goal 4.2 (SDG 4.2), Equal Access to Quality Pre-primary Education, governments throughout the world are working to ensure that all children have access to high-quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education by 2030. In the last 3 years, the Coalition government has been committed to its investment in Early Childhood Education as stipulated in thematic Area 3 in the 2023 Denarau Declaration aligned to the National Development Plan 2025-2029 (Vision 2050).

The Ministry of Education Pre-Primary/Kindergartens established and registered in the last 3 years is tabulated below:

Kindergarten (ECE) Establishment				
Year	Name of Pre-Primary Centre/Kindergarten	District	Division	Date of Registration & Establishment
2023	Navunibitu Angels Kindergarten	Ra	Western	24/01/2023
	Wairiki District School – Sunshine Smile Kindergarten	Macuata/Bua	Northern	05/12/2023
2024	Saint Joseph Husband of Mary Kindergarten	Nausori	Central	18/01/2024
	Yadein Vision Preschool	Nadi	Western	31/01/2024
	Namuka i Cake District School Kindergarten	Macuata	Northern	08/02/2024
	Noikoro District School Kindergarten	Navosa	Western	26/02/2024
	Nakoro Village Kindergarten	Navosa	Western	07/05/2024
	Navakasiga District School Kindergarten	Bua	Northern	08/05/2024
	Lautoka Central Preschool	Lautoka	Western	02/10/2024
	Wainadoi SDA Kindergarten	Suva	Western	17/10/2024
	Kalabu Primary School Kindergarten	Suva	Central	24/10/2024
	Saint Elizabeth Kindergarten	Macuata	Northern	12/12/2024
2025	Nagigi SDA Kindergarten	Cakaudrove	Northern	11/02/2025
	Waibasaga Kindergarten	Suva	Central	08/05/2025

Primary School

For Primary schools, MOE had 736 schools, and two new schools were established in 2022. These schools are: Tebara SDA (Nausori District) and Yasawa i Rara Infant School (Lautoka/Nadi Yasawa District). Currently, there are 738 registered MOE Primary Schools.

Secondary Schools

Secondary schools built in the last three years indicating the year it was established.

2022

No.	Name of School	Division	District	School Type	Year of Establishment and Registration
1.	Christian Community School	Western	Nadi	Secondary	26/01/2022
2.	Christian Community School	Western	Lautoka	Secondary	01/02/2022
3.	Lautoka SDA High School	Western	Lautoka	Secondary	30/03/2022
4.	EZRA Lincoln Secondary School	Western	Nadi	Secondary	13/07/2022

2023

No.	Name of School	Division	District	School Type	Year of Establishment and Registration
1.	Champs International Secondary	Western	Nadi	Secondary	31/01/2023

2024

No.	Name of School	Division	District	School Type	Year of Establishment and Registration
1.	Fiji Innovation Leadership International High School	Western	Nadroga	Secondary	02/05/2024

2025

No.	Name of School	Division	District	School Type	Year of Establishment and Registration
1.	Wainikeli Junior High School	Northern	Cakaudrove	Secondary	19/01/2025
2.	Totoya Secondary School	Eastern	Lau	Secondary	20/01/2025
3.	Matuku Secondary School	Eastern	Lau	Secondary	20/01/2025