

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

TUESDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER, 2025

[CORRECTED COPY]

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TUESDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER 2025

The Parliament met at 9.35 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair and read the prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present, except the honourable Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry; the honourable Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Culture, Heritage and Arts; the honourable Minister for Youth and Sports; the honourable Leader of the Opposition; the honourable A.N. Tuicolo; the honourable F.S. Koya; and honourable P.D. Kumar.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 24th November 2025, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPEAKER

Welcome

Honourable Members, I am pleased to welcome you to today's sitting, as we unite in the pursuit of our nation's progress. To those joining us in the public gallery, and to everyone watching the live broadcast, whether you are tuned in via television or streaming online, thank you for staying connected and engaged.

Greetings - Ambassador of Japan in Fiji

I also extend a warm welcome to the Japanese Ambassador, His Excellency Rokuichiro Michii. Welcome to Parliament, Your Excellency, and thank you for joining us this morning. The Fijian Parliament is grateful to the Government of Japan for its ongoing support to the Fiji Parliament Support Project. Thank you, Your Excellency.

Visit to Parliament - Kabara District School

Whilst we are still on pleasantries, honourable Members, please join me in warmly welcoming the students, teachers, and parents from Kabara District School, my island home. On behalf of the honourable Members, welcome to your Parliament. I hope this visit will provide valuable insights into the workings of Parliament and deepen your understanding of Parliament's role in Fiji's democracy.

With your indulgence, honourable Members, perhaps I can just give a pep talk to the students of my *alma mater*. You have travelled a long way to get here. In fact, our Civic Education Unit informs me that as a school tour group, you have travelled the furthest from Lau Group or from any other part of Fiji for that matter. For many of you, your trip from Kabara to Suva is your first ever. Open your eyes to the world that lay beyond your horizon of things and people that live in Suva, the capital and the urban areas that surround it.

A few of you have just seen your first car, enjoyed your first bus ride and if you are lucky, you have tasted your first McDonald's Big Mac and your DMC chicken. However, the lesson is this, I was exactly in the same situation 66 years ago, almost to the month when, as an 11 year old, I hung on tightly to my father's hand as I left Kabara to come here to seek further education.

My challenge to each one of you is very simple. If I survive and I persevere and have made it this far to where I am, so can you. In fact, I dare you to follow me. Say to yourself in the words of President Obama, "yes I can." Write these three words on the strip of a paper and tuck it into your school bag and read it as you walk to school each day, everyday for the rest of your school days of Kabara District School. I wish you every success in your future.

Response to Written Question No. 264/2025

For the information of honourable Members, the Secretariat has received a written response from the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry to Written Question No. 264/2025, asked by honourable Isikeli Tuiwailevu, and the response has been conveyed to honourable Tuiwailevu and a copy uploaded to the Parliament's website.

Chairperson - Public Accounts Committee (w.e.f. 10th November, 2025)

Finally, honourable Members, kindly be advised that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has held elections for its Chairperson on 10th November, 2025, and I am pleased to confirm that honourable Manoa Kamikamica is the new Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, and I wish him well in his new role. Honourable Jovesa Vocea remains the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The following Ministers have given notice to make Ministerial Statements under Standing Order 40:

- (1) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation;
- (2) Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General (two Statements);
- (3) Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection; and
- (4) Minister for Fisheries and Forestry.

The 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 five minutes and there will no other debate.

Aviation Safety and Upholding International Standards

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members and all Fijians present in the gallery and those watching from across the nation via our livestream; thank you for your time and for granting me the

opportunity to deliver this message of national importance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, aviation safety is not just a technical requirement - it is a matter of trust, of lives and of Fiji's standing in the global community. It is the principle that underpins every decision we make and the foundation upon which our tourism economy and international credibility rest.

Safety is neither optional, nor negotiable; it is the rule that governs our aviation system and protects every passenger, every crew member, and every aspiring student in this vital sector.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, recent events involving an air service operator, aviation training and maintenance provider require clarity. Its Aircraft Maintenance Organisation (AMO) Certificate expired on 22nd November, 2025, following a regulatory assessment that identified repeated and serious non-compliances.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF) has given many opportunities to this operator to make things right, but they have not responded in kind. Despite two limited three-months renewals granted to allow to reduce significant audit findings, recent audits in October and November 2025 identified deliberate and repeated non-compliance with CAAF's written restrictions and ANR 145C requirements, including the conduct of line maintenance and the use of unauthorised personnel to certify maintenance on training aircraft.

They have submitted a corrective action plan, but when assessed by CAAF, it has been found to be inadequate to restore confidence in the organisation's safety and quality systems. The CAAF has, therefore, decided that the AMO Certificate will not be renewed. This decision was made by CAAF under its statutory mandate, free from external influence, grounded in evidence, procedure, and duty.

We acknowledge the operational disruptions this has caused. Students will experience delays, training schedules will shift, and families will feel the impact. These realities are not dismissed. Yet, no disruption outweighs the obligation to protect lives. No timeline supersedes safety.

Sir, CAAF has confirmed it will review any corrective action, and any action plan submitted. Future certification will depend solely on demonstrated compliance - nothing more, nothing less.

Mr. Speaker, Fiji's aviation system is vast and intricate. It encompasses domestic and international airlines, airports, helicopter operators, private aerodromes, security providers, meteorology, engineering, ground-handling, catering and cargo. In total, 175 organisational oversight areas are monitored, involving hundreds of licensed professionals, nearly 500 aviation security screeners, and numerous ground safety teams. Each entity operates under established standards, requiring continuous inspections and engagement.

Mr. Speaker, this underscores that CAAF does not regulate a single operator. It oversees an entire ecosystem that sustains national connectivity, tourism, trade and emergency response. The regulator's workload is constant and demanding. It must balance competing pressures, while upholding fairness and compliance. Its independence is not negotiable if Fiji is to maintain credibility with international partners.

Put very simply, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the workload at CAAF is very heavy and compounded by the difficulties with this operator, where CAAF people have spent inordinate amount of time in addressing issues with this operation. In spite of the heavy workload, CAAF has gone the extra mile and beyond for this operator, contrary to what some people are saying.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I personally intervened. I called them together in Nadi in May, and by my side, I had one of the head of the aviation academies in Nadi to advise me. On one side was the operator and on the other side was CAAF. The operator had, as its head, a very experienced and a very highly qualified aviation person. He used to be a jumbo pilot with Air Pacific. Equally, on the side of CAAF was a former jumbo pilot of Fiji Airways. They are both equal of integrity in aviation. We thrashed out the issues, and we agreed on the way forward. I came away confident that we had resolved the matter and that the flying school would be back in operation within a month.

I checked back later, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the operator had dragged its feet and effectively reneged on what we had agreed on. That said, we will continue to engage. And I hate to say this, the people at CAAF are quite weary of this operator, and that is putting it mildly. But as I said, I continue to urge them to engage.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, within CAAF, there is a fit-and-proper-person framework which adds another layer of accountability. It assesses integrity, character, judgment, knowledge and behaviour. It reviews compliance history, professional relationships, medical fitness, and any convictions related to transport safety. It identifies traits that pose risks, such as impulsiveness, disregard for rules, or arrogance when confronted with safety protocols. These evaluations are conducted with fairness and natural justice, protecting both, the public and the reputation of Fiji's aviation graduates.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the most senior people with this operator have been cited for willful non-compliance, failure of governance, a cavalier attitude towards regulatory obligations, and a systemic culture of disregard condoned within the organisation. Effectively, the senior people are no longer deemed to be fit and proper within civil aviation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji's aviation framework aligns with the standards and recommended practices of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). As a contracting State to the Chicago Convention, Fiji is obligated to fully implement the provisions of the Convention and the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) adopted by ICAO. These obligations include establishing and maintaining uniform safety, security and identification regulations, aligned with international requirements to ensure the safe, orderly, and efficient development of global civil aviation.

Let me stress this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji, as a State, is obligated to provide safe and secure skies, as per our contract with ICAO. Compliance with this obligation is not optional. It is a core responsibility of all ICAO member States, and it is fundamental to safeguarding the integrity, credibility, and international acceptance of Fiji's aviation systems.

In fulfilling these obligations, Fiji's aviation laws and regulatory framework have been established in accordance with ICAO's SARPs and are subject to ICAO's Universal Safety Audit Programme, which evaluates every State against eight critical elements of an effective safety oversight system. These critical elements include:

- (1) Primary aviation legislation;
- (2) Specific operating regulations;
- (3) A civil aviation system including the safety oversight function;
- (4) Technical personnel qualification and training;
- (5) Procedures and technical guidance;
- (6) Licensing and certification obligations;
- (7) Surveillance obligations; and
- (8) Resolutions of safety concerns.

Fiji was audited in 2019, and following further ICAO assessments, now holds an effective implementation score of 76.25 percent. This score, Mr. Speaker, Sir, places Fiji above the global average and the Asia-Pacific average. So, CAAF Fiji is proud of its position within ICAO.

Since then, ICAO has continued through its Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme with its Continuous Monitoring Approach. Under this framework, ICAO continuously monitors Fiji's performance through protocol questions, risk-based assessments, and follow-up validation activities, ensuring that Fiji maintains and strengthens compliance with ICAO standards and recommended practices.

To support this ongoing oversight, CAAF established a dedicated Standards and Compliance Department, which serves as Fiji's National Continuous Monitoring Coordinator to ICAO. This ensures that the State remains actively engaged with ICAO's monitoring requirements, including updates to protocol questions, corrective action plans, and safety oversight documentation.

While ICAO's post-2019 activity has been focused on continuous monitoring, Fiji has continued to demonstrate strong regulatory performance. This strong performance was strongly recognized when Fiji received the ICAO Council President's Certificate in 2022, acknowledging our improvement of more than 15 percent and confirmation that Fiji has no Significant Safety Concerns. These outcomes reinforce our continued commitment to meeting our international obligations as an ICAO member State. In addition, ICAO conducted Universal Security Audit Programme in 2023, which concluded with no Significant Security Concerns, reinforcing Fiji's commitment to maintaining aviation systems that meet international standards.

Mr. Speaker, students enrolled in flying and aviation remain a priority. Their education must continue in safe compliant environments. Their future depends on training that meets the highest global standards. Government will support practical interim solutions to minimise disruption. Training will proceed under institutions that meet regulatory requirements. The sector will not abandon these students, Fiji needs them. Our industry needs them. Our future pilots must learn within a system that upholds international norms.

Mr. Speaker, aviation is an unforgiving domain. There is no margin for error. Safety cannot be compromised because aircraft demand precision, infrastructure demands vigilance, and the global community demands regulatory integrity. In this industry, shortcuts cost lives, and standards are the only currency of trust. The Government will defend CAAF's independence, uphold the integrity of international commitments, and protect the safety of passengers, crew and students. This is our duty to Fiji.

MR. SPEAKER.- I now invite the honourable Leader of the Opposition, or his designate, for his response.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation for his Statement this morning. Due to time restriction, I will just outline the information that I have been able to get this morning in regard to Sunflower Aviation and the subject that is being discussed by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Sunflower Aviation has been ordered by the Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji (CAAF) to shut down its operations last Friday. I understand that Sunflower is a subsidiary of Joyce Aviation Group. Tim Joyce is an Australian, and he entered the tourism industry in Fiji at the same time when I left the Navy to join Captain Cook Cruises. My view is that the repercussions of high-handedness in trying to restrict an investor who has come into Fiji, carried out the preliminary requirements, and has been training for all these years, have been basically told to close shop.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I understand that the Director, Tim Joyce, was simply being sent an email, telling him to shut down Sunflower operations last Friday. My view is that Parliament should be concerned in the way this company has been treated, as an overall investment by overseas investors, that was convinced to initially come to Fiji and invest. I hope that CAAF has done everything that they can do to assist Joyce Aviation. I hope that the honourable Deputy Prime Minister as Minister, has done everything possible to help this important tourism investment here in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker Sir, I remember when the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) used to have high-handed attitude in going after taxpayers. Over a period of time, they basically turned around 180 degrees and became very friendly to taxpayers and we, in Fiji, could be witness to this huge turnaround by FRCS. It now enjoys the support of investors, the support of businesspeople and the general population of Fiji who are taxpayers. It is the attitude that they treat others, they treat the people that they are supposed to be serving and allowing them the ability to discuss issues that come into play when investors and taxpayers in Fiji are facing these challenges.

Aviation, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is like shipping - it is a technical industry and we, as Ministers and as Members of Parliament, do not understand what are involved in these technical areas. I know Tim Joyce, he could be quite abrupt and dictatorial, but there is a tendency, and I ask the honourable Deputy Prime Minister to, please, talk to Tim Joyce, have a discussion, because this is not important only for aviation or for Sunflower, but for every investor who comes into Fiji and invests their money, their time and human resource to assist Fiji in moving forward.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, before we proceed to call on the honourable Minister for Justice for his Ministerial Statement, it is my great pleasure to extend a warm and sincere welcome to the distinguished delegation Members of the Australian Government, who have joined us from Canberra today:

- Your Excellency Peter Roberts;
- Your Excellency Elizabeth Peak, Head of DFAT's Office of the Pacific;
- Jan Hutton, First Assistant Secretary, Pacific Security Division, Office of the Pacific; and
- Sonja Gray, Director of Pacific Engagement, Department of Defence.

They are accompanied by members of the Australian High Commission diplomatic staff. On behalf of Parliament, we thank you for your presence today and welcome you to Parliament this morning.

(Acclamation)

Civil Registration Vital Statistics Awareness and Registration Campaign

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, our distinguished guests from the Australian and also Japanese Governments, and of course, from the far away island of Kabara – *malo; ni sa bula vinaka saka* and a very good morning to you all.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to inform this august House of Fiji's Civil Registration Vital Statistics, or what is normally called CRVS Awareness and Registration Campaign, for the period July to November 2025. The CRVS is a basic right, a right that we must be afford to all our people.

In Fiji, birth registration is governed by the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1975. The Act states that birth should be registered within two months of the child's birth, but birth registration is considered 'on time' if completed within one year of the child's birth.

In the priority areas identified through CRVS Awareness and Registration Campaign, the average time for a birth to be registered was between two years to three years. Through this Campaign, which is a vital national initiative, we are dedicated to ensuring that every Fijian is counted, recognised and included from birth to death.

This Campaign represents more than an administrative exercise; it reaffirms Fiji's national commitment to equity, dignity and identity for all citizens. Through this effort, Government agencies are extending their reach to every village, island, and household, ensuring that no Fijian remains invisible in the eyes of the Government.

By strengthening CRVS systems and promoting timely registration, Fiji continues to advance its vision of inclusive development, where every birth is registered, every life is acknowledged, and every Fijian is recognised.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji has continued to demonstrate regional leadership in strengthening its CRVS systems. Earlier this year, the Fiji CRVS Committee, in partnership with key stakeholders and with funding from Vital Strategies and technical support from our development partners, including the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Pacific Community (SPC) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), undertook a comprehensive analysis of on-time birth registration across Fiji. This analysis disaggregated data by gender, maternal age and marital status, and for the first time, standardised key geographical variables such as place of birth and place of registration for all birth records from 2015 to 2024. This was a major milestone, as it allowed us to identify priority areas and gender-specific inequities in birth registration across our islands – information that had not been possible to analyse before.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, during the two-day national capacity building workshop held in Suva in March this year, the Divisional Registrars and key CRVS stakeholders examined barriers that continue to delay on-time birth registration, particularly among mothers in rural and remote communities. These barriers include geographical accessibility, knowledge and awareness gaps, cultural and traditional practices, financial constraints and, of course, social stigma. These are not just administrative issues, they are human rights challenges that affect our citizens' access to education, healthcare, social protection and justice.

To address these challenges, the Fiji CRVS Committee, through the Registrar-General's Office, is actively implementing measures. Key recommendations being pursued include:

- (1) Community Awareness – Sustained nationwide awareness programmes, especially in areas with the longest delays in registration.
- (2) Collaboration with Ministry of iTaukei Affairs – Strengthening partnerships to address barriers unique to the *iTaukei* communities.
- (3) Health Sector Engagement – Placement of birth registration banners at childhood wellness and immunisation clinics, ensuring mothers are reminded at key touchpoints.
- (4) Hospital-Based Registration Desks – Establishment of registration desks in major hospitals, bringing services closer to mothers and newborns.
- (5) Mobile Registration Teams – Expansion of mobile teams to reach remote villages and maritime communities identified through this project.

(6) Digital Transformation –

Progress towards online and mobile-based registration systems, ensuring accessibility for all while promoting data integrity and efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the awareness and registration campaign covered the priority areas identified through data analysis. It included services such as New Birth Registration (NBR), Late Birth Registration (LBR), Death Registration (DR), Change of Name (CN), Correction of Error (COE), Addition of Father's Particulars (AP), Legitimation of Birth (LOB), and the issuance of certificates.

Between July and November this year, the CRVS Awareness and Registration Campaign covered 10 targeted areas including Lakeba, Naitasiri, Kadavu, Koro, Tailevu, Beqa, Serua, Vanua Levu and right up to the highest village in Fiji – Navai. Through these efforts, hundreds of citizens were reached, long-delayed registrations were completed, and families were empowered with the legal documentation that affirms their identity and belonging.

Over the course of the campaign, several recurring issues have been identified, affecting timely and accurate birth registration across various Divisions and islands, including lost birth notification forms, no or limited interconnectivity, social and cultural factors, particularly for those children born out of wedlock.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are committed to resolving these issues through improved access and connectivity, capacity building and awareness, strengthening data integrity and document management, and addressing social and cultural barriers and consideration for alternative proof of identity measures.

Through the combined efforts of the Fiji Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, and our development partners, tangible progress has been made to bring CRVS services closer to our people.

As we look ahead, our focus remains steadfast to build a CRVS system that is people-centered, accessible to all, and capable of supporting national planning, service delivery, and social protection for every citizen.

The late registration of birth remains the most prevalent challenges, particularly in Lakeba, Nabouwalu, Savusavu, Taveuni, Kadavu, Tailevu, Beqa, Serua, Naitasiri and Navosa. A key contributing factor is the delay or loss of notification of birth forms from health facilities, which hinders the registration process.

In several areas, especially in outer islands, limited connectivity and difficult access to government services further compound these challenges. It was also noted that in Lakeba, baptism cards are being used for school admissions in place of birth certificates, due to registration delays. This is probably an area that we have to work closely with the Ministry of Education in terms of the enrolment of children.

In Tailevu, social and cultural factors were highlighted, with the increase in children born out of wedlock, who are not being recorded in the Vola ni Kawa Bula, thereby, affecting their registration.

The issues raised fall under the responsibility of the Births, Deaths and Marriages Office (BDMO), the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the iTaukei Affairs Board, emphasising the need for coordinated efforts to strengthen CRVS service delivery and ensure timely issuance of

vital documents.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us continue to work together, guided by the principle that every birth matters, every life counts, and every death is recorded with dignity - principles that also govern our work in the human rights space and during this period of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. Let us be reminded and remain committed to recording every vital event, for it is in the recording of vital events that we can and will develop evidence-based policies for our people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER.- I now invite the honourable Leader of the Opposition, or his designate, for his response.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the honourable Minister and Acting Attorney-General for the update on CRVS. I am glad to see the immense work that has taken place in this particular area. I know there was a report that was presented by one of the Committees on the very challenges that are being addressed in the Statement itself.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, year 2015 to the year 2024 was the decade for CRVS. Fiji signed up to that agreement to be able to get 100 percent of our children registered, as per the requirements of the Child Care and Protection Act 2024 a few years ago, so it is a right.

I noticed from the honourable Minister's Statement that the CRVS is an important way for everyone in this country to know that they are counted, recognised and included. If you are not counted, not recognised and are not included, you are going to miss out on some of the benefits that you can have in this country.

Obviously, there is an adage that we have, that if you want to be able to manage something, you have to measure it. Obviously, measuring, and getting that information is important for everyone to be counted, so that it can give us the information that we need to be able to plan for access to health, access to education and all those development activities.

The challenges that were outlined by the honourable Minister in terms of registration of people at birth has always been a delay. I do not think that we have been able to hit the target, which is within two months, so within two months, everyone should be registered, whether you are being born or passing away, so that the records are up to-date.

I am glad to see the challenges that have been placed and the measures that the honourable Minister has outlined about things that need to be done to enhance community awareness. I know there was an app that was produced by the Ministry of Justice for digital registration but because of lack of awareness, it was not used much. Again, when you have the problems of low connectivity in other areas, that is another thing that impacts on this, so I am glad to see the effort, or the committee awareness.

There was a REACH Programme that was being used at one time - a REACH was used and was getting out there, and I am thankful that they have been able to go to those 10 particular areas that they targeted. We hope to see that there is more collaboration with the different bodies that are involved. We have talked about the hospital services. I am glad to see the hospital registration desk. The need for collaboration with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the Vola ni Kawa Bula, and the need also to work with others, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

I think there is a stronger need, perhaps, especially in the rural and maritime areas for closer collaboration with the *Turaga ni Koro* and *Mata ni Tikina* in terms of the job requirements that they

should have. In order for them to get their allowance, maybe it is a requirement for them to make sure that everyone is registered to actually carry that out. Also, for our District Officers and District Advisory Councillors, when we are looking at giving them allowances, some of these KPIs need to be built into the way that they get their stipends and allowances, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I was listening to the Statement that was made, coming back to the recommendation that was made by the Committee and I cannot remember whether it was the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, that said that we need to have a closer collaboration between the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare, to finally achieve that 100 percent registration of CRVS - critical registration in order to manage it, so that we are able to collect those statistics.

A few years ago, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think, in 2018, we had the Parental Assistance Programme whereby if you registered your child quickly and you are on a low-income bracket, you got \$500 or \$1,000. I think that sort of incentive stopped in 2018 but perhaps, we might need to look at some more innovative incentives like that.

Primarily, in the rural areas, we have people who are there - *Turaga ni Koro, Mata ni Tikina, Liuliu ni Yavusa*, who are being given allowances. However, as part of their responsibilities, we can put this requirement on them to make sure that people are registered so that we know our numbers, Government can plan its work well and people can access the services that they need in this country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a Point of Order.

MR. SPEAKER.- Yes, honourable Gavoka, a Point of Order.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Under Standing Order 81, I need a clarification, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Honourable Koroilavesau had indicated that Joyce Aviation Group got notification by email. They were given a seven-page lecture on 21st November, regarding the grounding of their operation. That needs to be corrected in Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Koroilavesau, you understand what he is saying that, in fact, there is a misrepresentation from the intervention?

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I understand. I was just reading what was available to me.

MR. SPEAKER.- So, the record will bear that, in fact, your interjection is taken on board and is accepted.

Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting - 9th to 14th February, 2026

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament and our distinguished guests; I am pleased to inform this august House that the Government is hosting the next Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting in Nadi from 9th February to 14th February next year. This is a significant honour and responsibility for Fiji, as it marks the first time that our nation will host the Commonwealth pre-eminent gathering of Attorney-Generals, Justice Ministers and senior legal policymakers from across the 56 Commonwealth countries.

The Meeting serves as the central forum for member countries to collectively deliberate on

legal policy, rule of law, priorities, and justice sector reforms. It provides an avenue for the exchange of experiences, innovations and commitments that uphold our shared Commonwealth values, democracy, human rights, good governance and access to justice.

Fiji's hosting of this event demonstrates international confidence in our legal institutions and underscores our role as a leader in the Pacific on justice and governance issues. It also offers a significant opportunity to showcase the strength, inclusivity and modernisation of our own legal system.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the agenda papers for the 2026 Meeting reflect a forward-looking and comprehensive vision of the Commonwealth's legal priorities. They have been developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat, in close collaboration with member States, and were reviewed at the Senior Officials' Meeting held in London on 16th October this year, which was successfully chaired by our Solicitor-General. During that meeting, member States requested additional time to review and comment on the papers. Another Senior Officials' Meeting will be held on 12th January next year, to confirm the papers for the upcoming Ministerial Meeting.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to briefly highlight the papers scheduled to be discussed during the meeting, as follows:

- (1) Access to Justice and Legal Certainty Agenda, focuses on developing Commonwealth Model Contracts for Energy, Extractives and Infrastructure, aiming to strengthen transparency and legal certainty in major public projects.
- (2) A Draft Model Law on Suppression Orders, balancing the principles of open justice with privacy and digital realities.
- (3) Dealing with Emerging Areas of Law and Technology, a Model Law on Stablecoins, and one on Digital Trade, have been developed to support member countries in regulating digital finance and commerce securely and responsibly.
- (4) There will be a discussion on Artificial Intelligence in Justice Systems and the responsible use of open-source digital evidence in justice systems.
- (5) There will also be a discussion on the regulation of third-party litigation funding, ensuring access to justice, while safeguarding judicial integrity.
- (6) On climate change, there will be a paper on the Impact of Sea Level Rise on Maritime Boundaries, which will be particularly important to Small Island Developing States, like Fiji. This discussion follows the recent Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Climate Change. It will help shape legal frameworks that ensure fairness and stability for States most affected by rising seas.
- (7) In terms of strengthening Judicial Capacity and Accountability, the Meeting intends to launch initiatives such as the Commonwealth e-Course for First-Time Judicial Officers, a Pro Bono Centre for Member States, and the Court Performance Toolkit, all designed to enhance judicial competence, access to legal aid and public confidence in justice systems.
- (8) In terms of Governance and Democratic Values, as the Commonwealth marks 25 years of the Latimer House Principles, Ministers will reaffirm the centrality of the separation of powers, accountability and judicial independence, and the foundations of the rule of law within the Commonwealth family. The Latimer Principles outline a framework for good

governance, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights in member nations.

Fiji will also host the official side event during the Meeting week, focussed on alternative dispute resolution. The side event aims to provide a platform for dialogue between Commonwealth law ministers, legal experts and traditional leaders on shared justice challenges and opportunities. The event will explore how our traditional mechanisms can strengthen law and justice systems, promote reconciliation, and improve access to justice, while also examining how traditional practices can be leveraged to enhance access to justice, such as addressing case backlogs in our courts.

Collectively, areas of discussion are deeply relevant to Fiji and our regional neighbours. They will support our shared priorities of building resilient justice institutions, responding to the realities of climate change, adopting digital innovations responsibly, and ensuring that our people, particularly those in vulnerable and remote communities, enjoy equal access to justice.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, preparations for hosting the Meeting are well underway. An inter-governmental taskforce, chaired by the Solicitor-General, was established last year to oversee policy and gender coordination with the Commonwealth Secretariat, led by our team of lawyers. The administrative arrangements such as the meeting venue, protocol, security and hospitality have designated leads from Government Ministries, namely, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Commerce and Business Development; Ministry of Information; Ministry of Immigration; Ministry of Policing; Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and Culture, Heritage and Arts; Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection; Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation; and the Fiji Police Force.

The Commonwealth Secretariat recently concluded its second planning mission for the meeting with the taskforce from 10th to 13th November. This involved meetings with relevant taskforce leads on the meeting venue, the opening ceremony, media and audio-visual requirements, protocol, security and transport, hospitality and accommodation. There were also site visits to our correctional facilities at Naboro, Korovou, Natabua and Ba, for potential prison site event. Other side events scheduled for the week of the meeting will focus on youth participation, persons with disabilities and inmates.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji's hosting of the next Commonwealth Law Ministers meeting will be a defining opportunity for us to lead global dialogue on international legal developments and access to resources in these areas. Hosting the meeting will also reaffirm our commitment to a fair, transparent and inclusive justice system; one that upholds the rule of law and ensures that every Fiji citizen has equal access to justice.

I look forward to the continued support of this House and our partner Ministries and agencies as we prepare to welcome the Commonwealth family to our shores next year.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the announcement that Fiji will host the Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting (CLMM) in 2026 from 9th to 13th February marks a significant milestone and reflects strong international confidence in Fiji's legal system. This is the first time Fiji will host this prestigious event. The Ministerial Statement by the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General highlights the potential of this forum to be the key driver for domestic progress in justice and governance.

On strategic advantage and international exposure, hosting the CLMM 2026 is a strategic move that provides the Fijian Government with considerable advantages. This decision to host shows Fiji's position in the nation as a leader in the Pacific on justice and governance. It signals global recognition of the progress and modernisation occurring within Fiji's legal framework. This system

of international approval can bolster investor confidence and improve Fiji's standing on the global stage.

The event offers a unique opportunity to showcase the advancements and the modernisation of Fiji's legal system. This exposure goes beyond mere public relations. It allows Fiji to demonstrate tangible reforms in areas such as court procedures, legislative development and human rights framework to influence Law Ministers and officials from across the Commonwealth.

The CLMM serves as a key forum for member countries to discuss legal policies, rule of law, priorities, and justice reform. By hosting, Fiji places itself at the centre of this vital discussion, ensuring its national interest and regional perspectives are heard.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the most significant advantages of hosting the CLMM is the unparalleled learning and exposure it provides to the Fijian Government and its legal institutions. The meeting is designed for member countries to share experiences that support core Commonwealth values including democracy, human rights and good governance. Fijian officials will have direct access to and the opportunity to participate in detailed discussions on successful justice reform implemented by other member States, which can be adopted for local use.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, exposure to the latest international standards and best practices in legal policy and reform will directly contribute to institutional strengthening within the Ministry of Justice, Office of the Attorney-General, Judiciary and Legislature. This is crucial for developing robust local expertise.

Hosting this event facilitates direct high-level dialogue with Commonwealth Law Ministers and legal experts, opening doors to technical assistance, capacity development programmes and bilateral cooperation that can accelerate Fiji's democratic reform agenda.

The theme of CLMM is linked to the democratic values and the rule of law. For a government currently facing challenges of perceived struggles in the areas of democracy and good governance, hosting this event offers a critical catalytic moment for improvement.

The CLMM explicitly focuses on the rule of law priorities. By engaging in this discussion, the Government can signal a renewed commitment to strengthening the independence of the institution, ensuring equality before the law, and promoting access to justice for all citizens.

The principles of good governance are the core focus of the meeting. Participation and leadership in these areas naturally necessitate a focus on transparency, accountability, and the fight against corruption. By embracing the Conference mandate, the Government can leverage the event to commit to and implement concrete legislative and policy measures to improve its standing in these areas.

The Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting provides a platform to address human rights issues. This encourages the Government to review domestic human rights laws and mechanisms against international benchmarks, fostering a climate of greater respect for fundamental freedom and democratic principles. Public commitments to these shared values, especially while hosting an international event, create positive external pressure for domestic adherence.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, hosting the Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meeting in 2026 is more than a diplomatic achievement, it is a powerful investment in Fiji's future legal and political stability. It is an opportunity for the Government to not only lend and gain exposure, but also to demonstrate a sincere and actionable commitment to overcoming the current governance

challenges by embedding the principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law deeper into the national fabric.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will now suspend proceedings for our morning tea break. Parliament stands suspended, and we will resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.32 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.15 a.m.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

HON. S. KIRAN.- *Ni sa yadra vinaka, namaskaram* and a very good morning to you all. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Ministers, honourable Assistant Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition and honourable Members of Parliament; today, we mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise today to reaffirm Fiji's unwavering commitment to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, a national priority that stands at the heart of our pursuit of justice, equality and inclusive development. Violence against women and girls encompasses a range of harmful behaviour directed at women, rooted in patriarchy, that cause gender inequality and discrimination. It manifests in various forms including physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse as well as harmful practices such as trafficking.

Violence against women and girls is not confined to the private sphere it permeates every dimension of society, affecting national development, social stability, public health and the safety and dignity of all Fijians. Addressing this issue is therefore not only a woman's matter, but it is a national priority, requiring engagement from every sector, every institution and every leader in our country.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji records one of the highest prevalence rates of gender-based violence in the world. The cost of violence is not only emotional, but also national. The economic impact is estimated to be equivalent to 7 percent of Fiji's GDP, affecting families, our health system, productivity and the nation's development. Yet, many remain silent due to stigma, fear and shame.

That is why our response must be survivor-centered and above all, accessible to everyone - including women and girls with disabilities and those from diverse sexual orientations and gender identities who face heightened risks and deeper barriers to seeking assistance. Around 60 percent of Fijian women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime and 64 percent of ever-partnered women have endured physical or sexual violence from their intimate partner.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Police data shows that girls between the ages of 13 and 17 continue to be the most vulnerable to sexual violence in our country. Mr. Speaker, Sir, from 2020 to 2024, a total of 4,159 child sexual offence cases were recorded nationwide, and 70 percent of these cases involved girls. For our women and girls with disability, the risk of abuse is even higher.

There is another form of violence unfolding, 70 percent of HIV/AIDS cases are men, largely through injectable drug use, and they spread the virus to their wives and partners, and now we have increasing transmission from women to their newborn babies.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, elderly women are increasingly becoming targets of violence as well. In 2024 alone, 122 cases were reported among women aged 60 and above, almost double the number recorded in 2023. This sharp increase tells us that elder abuse, including sexual violence, is not only occurring but is finally becoming more visible and more frequently reported. These realities expose a dark truth - the cycle of gender-based violence in Fiji spans across generations from our girls to our grandmothers.

As a nation, we can no longer allow silence, stigma or fear to shield perpetrators. Today, harm is no longer confined to physical spaces. It now crosses digital borders - amplified by technology, anonymity, speed, and reach. Women and girls face cyberbullying, non-consensual

image sharing, digital stalking, hate speech and fake online content. These attacks silence women's voices and erode confidence and leadership. The Government, our Coalition Government, has taken decisive steps in recent years to strengthen prevention, protection, and coordinated action.

The rollout of the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against All Women and Girls (NAPVAWG) represents Fiji's historic shift towards a unified, evidence-based prevention agenda. The Service Delivery Protocol (SDP) is a key mechanism that ensures coordinated, survivor-centered response, strengthens accountability, and promotes consistent, high-quality services for women and girls. The protocol is currently being updated, following the June review process, with its finalisation scheduled at the validation workshop this week.

Following Fiji's constructive dialogue on CEDAW in April 2025, we have intensified efforts to complement, or rather to implement the Concluding Observations, ensuring that our policies and programmes remain fully aligned with international obligations. Strengthened coordination through the National Women's Machinery, together with cross-ministry partnerships, has enhanced the delivery of gender responsive services.

We are investing in the capacity of frontline responders, including police officers, healthcare workers, social service providers, and community advocates who play a vital role in ensuring safety, justice, and timely support for survivors. Community outreach programmes, in collaboration with faith-based organisations, traditional leaders, and youth groups, continue to drive awareness and promote behavioural change at the grassroots level.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government is also deepening its focus on primary prevention, recognising that lasting change requires addressing harmful norms, attitudes and behaviour that perpetuate violence. This includes engaging men and boys as partners, empowering faith leaders and community gatekeepers, and strengthening interventions within schools, workplaces, and youth leadership programmes. Preventing violence before it occurs is our most powerful long-term strategy.

At the same time, we remain committed to ensuring survivor-centered and trauma-informed support services. The Government works closely with partner organisations including funding toll free lines: 1560 (National Domestic Violence Helpline run by Fiji Women's Crisis Centre) and 1325 (Child Helpline run by Medical Services Pacific). This involves working with partners to provide shelters, counselling services, and access to justice, healthcare, and social protection.

I wish to acknowledge the essential contributions of civil society organisations, community-based groups, and frontline responders who remain at the forefront of supporting survivors and advocating for safer communities.

I particularly wish to pay tribute to Shamima Ali and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre Team for their tireless advocacy on the elimination of gender-based violence over the years. I also pay tribute to Fiji Women's Rights Movement, House of Sarah, Fiji Council of Churches, Empower Pacific, Medical Services Pacific, and all other CSOs and faith-based organisations, advocates, researchers and frontline service providers. I thank the Methodist Church for launching its domestic helpline yesterday. I also wish to thank all our development partners who have supported us in this ongoing fight, including the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, UN Women, UNFPA and SPC, among other agencies.

The civil society movement and our partners are leading the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence from 24th November, 2025 to 10th December 2025. This period serves as a strategic platform to raise awareness, promote prevention, strengthen community engagement, and ensure accountability at both, national and local levels. The 2025 campaign theme "Support the

Survivor, Report the Abuse, and End Impunity Online and Offline,” has been carefully designed and calls on bystanders and anyone who knows if violence is occurring in a family to support the survivor and help report the matter. During these 16 days of activism, we have integrated national events and public advocacy with divisional initiatives, engaging communities across the Central, Northern and Western Divisions, including remote areas such as Taveuni and Rotuma.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these national and divisional activities demonstrate our resolve to integrate prevention, protection, community engagement and accountability in a coordinated and inclusive manner. Importantly, they reinforce that the elimination of violence against women and girls requires the participation of every Fijian, across all communities, divisions, and institutions. Together, through sustained commitment, strategic policy action, community engagement and leadership at all levels, Fiji can achieve a society where all women and girls are safe, empowered and able to contribute fully to national development. Our efforts during the 16 Days of Activism and beyond underscore that prevention, protection and accountability are not optional - they are the very foundation of a just and equitable future.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I call on all Members of Parliament, communities, organisations and individuals to work together with renewed determination. Ending violence against women and girls is not merely an aspiration, it is a responsibility we must uphold with unity, compassion and resolve.

Let us stand together to support the survivors, report abuse and challenge harmful norms, creating safe, inclusive and empowering communities. Through sustained collaboration and committed action, we can eradicate gender-based violence and ensure a brighter, safer and more equitable future for all Fijians.

Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute to every girl child, every woman who has suffered domestic violence and call on anyone suffering currently to seek assistance on our toll-free line 1560. May God bless our women and girls. May God bless Fiji.

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise today to acknowledge and lend my voice and the voice of the Opposition to this crucial Ministerial Statement delivered by the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection.

The elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls is not and must never be a partisan issue. It is a fundamental national mission that transcends all political divides and for which every member of this Parliament shares equal responsibility. I commend the honourable Minister for bringing this statement forward today, marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. It correctly places this issue at the heart of our pursuit of justice and equality.

We, on this side of the House, wholeheartedly share the conviction that respect for all our women and girls stands at the very core of the values we hold dear — to fear God and respect our community. We must be brutally honest about the state of our nation. We all celebrate the natural beauty and warmth of the Fijian spirit. We cannot look away from the shameful fact that the prevalence of violence against women in Fiji is alarmingly high.

As alluded to by the honourable Minister, we can see many reports of violence on *Facebook*, recently we have seen a police officer handcuffing the wife and beating her. Today, I am reading a housewife being dragged out of a house and beaten by the husband. When she goes to report the matter, the matter is not reported. When she goes to the hospital for the medical report, the report is missing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this violence is not simply a matter of private disagreements - it is a systematic violation of human rights, fueled by deep, entrenched gender inequality. It is a consequence of harmful social norms and patriarchal attitudes that continue to permit the entitlement of men to control and dominate women. This is where the challenge to the Government and all of us begins. Where is the urgency in the execution of our plans? This leads me to the most critical educational component of this discussion.

I speak now not just as a member of Parliament, but as a son, a father, and a member of the community. We must address the most heartbreaking cause of this epidemic, the intergenerational transmission of violence. When a child, particularly a young boy, grows up seeing his father, a primary male role model, use aggression and physical force to control or settle disagreements with his mother, that boy internalizes a dangerous lesson. He learns a behavioural script that violence is acceptable, that it is a tool for achieving control, and that it is somehow a definition of strength and masculinity.

He learns, not in a textbook, but in his own home, the place that should be his sanctuary. The unfortunate reality is that a boy who witnesses this violence is statistically at a significantly higher risk - as much as ten times higher, of becoming a perpetrator himself in his adult relationships. This is how the tragedy perpetuates itself - the unhealed trauma of one generation becomes the violent act of the next. We cannot, and we must not allow this cycle to continue in the beautiful islands of Fiji. Therefore, the most powerful and enduring campaign is a personal one, beginning in our own homes and communities.

We must actively and consciously work to teach our sons a better way. We must redefine masculinity; teaching them that true strength is found not in physical dominance, but in gentleness, patience, and respect. We must teach them that they are powerful precisely because they have the capacity to choose respect over reaction, dialogue over aggression and love over control.

We must make it a daily practice to love, respect and cherish the women and the girls in our lives. We must elevate our daughters, reminding them of their inherent worth, their intellect, and their right to safety and equality, but equally, we must raise our sons to be the champions of that world, the protectors of that safety and the partners in that equality.

Every father, every grandfather, every teacher, every community leader has this sacred duty. The Fiji National Action Plan to prevent violence against all women and girls is a commendable roadmap. We, in the Opposition, fully supports its objectives, but we demand transparent execution and measurable results. It gives us the tools for public education and the campaigns are helping to break the cycle and shift our culture.

The Government must now translate commitments into consistent year-on-year funding. Accountable enforcement of our laws and sustained support for the civil society groups who are doing the heavy lifting on the frontlines. Today we commit our collective will. We shall not be silent. We shall ensure that the safety of every Fijian woman and girl is our personal, non-negotiable mission. We work tirelessly and we will hold the government to account, until every corner of Fiji is a place where respect is the only currency, and where every child grows up free from the violence of the past.

Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing within Fiji's Fisheries Waters

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen; and viewers tuning in live on Parliament's *Facebook* channel: *ni*

sa yadra vinaka.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to deliver a Statement on the Ministry of Fisheries' strategic approach to combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in Fiji's fisheries waters. Fiji has been a large ocean State with an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of approximately 1.3 million square kilometres, primarily face challenges of monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement. Our vast EEZ is more susceptible to IUU fishing of its fisheries resources.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, IUU fishing involves the violation of fisheries regulations and the management measures that protect fish stocks and biodiversity. IUU fishing is about fishing for commercial purposes without a fishing licence, or poaching in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), or using prohibited fishing gear such as dynamites and underwater breathing apparatus, or catching and selling prohibited and undersized fish, or non-reporting and misreporting of fisheries catches.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, IUU fishing occurs in all types of fisheries from riverine and inshore areas within customary fishing rights areas to archipelagic waters, territorial waters, the EEZ and the high seas. The increase in domestic and international demand for seafood, along with limited alternative livelihoods, the push for higher profits and financial incentives and weak regulations, creates an environment conducive to illegal fishing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, IUU fishing results in a loss of approximately FJ\$50 million, an equivalent of US\$2.1 million in annual revenue to our blue economy. Fiji's strategic approach moves beyond the simple physical patrolling of our fisheries waters to an inter-intelligence-led approach to improve monitoring, control, and surveillance in those waters.

The Ministry of Fisheries is heavily investing in enhancing the monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement of our fisheries waters through the review of fisheries regulations, the adoption of advanced technologies and the strengthening of international and regional cooperation, as well as further alignment with international seafood best practices.

The Ministry coordinates the monitoring, control and surveillance, and enforcement to combat IUU through the Offshore Fisheries Management Division which coordinates and manages offshore fisheries operations including research, assessment and development.

The Inshore Fisheries Management Division oversees and handles monitoring, control, surveillance and enforcement in the inshore area and the collection of fisheries-dependent data for municipal markets and landing sites.

Recently, a significant undertaking by the Ministry is the amendment of the Fisheries Act 1941 to the Fiji Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2025, which introduces a new section on the appointment of authorised officers and further enhances and expands their powers to search land premises. It also establishes the issuance of an inshore fixed penalty notice as the initial setup to deter non-compliance.

The Fisheries Surveillance and Operations Centre located in the Ministry of Fisheries, Walu Bay Office, serves as the central hub for Fiji's monitoring, control and surveillance operations. It functions as an information centre that gathers data from various sources, integrates and analyses it to generate actionable intelligence.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Centre operates essentially as a maritime air traffic control for fishing vessels. It uses specialised software that integrates diverse data streams into a single visualisation platform with a live map displayed on large screens. The Centre analyses data streams from the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), satellite imagery, Automatic Identification System (AIS),

Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) and electronic reporting to track vessel movements and fishing activity within Fiji fisheries waters.

When the Centre detects IUU activity, intelligence is packaged and relayed to our enforcement assets such as the Fiji Navy for an at-sea interception, or to our authorised officers who are gazetted under the Offshore Fisheries Management Act for a priority boarding when a vessel arrives in port. The Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency's VMS sends data to the Centre. This satellite-based vessel tracking system offers a near real-time picture of where fishing boats are located within the EEZs of member countries and in the nearby high seas.

The VMS is primarily a surveillance tool used by Pacific Island nations to monitor fishing activities across the vast Western and Central Pacific Ocean. It is mandatory to be installed on industrial commercial fishing boats operating in the region as a licensing requirement. The EMS is an installed camera on domestic longline fishing vessels that sends specific data types to the Centre. The EMS complements the VMS by serving as the 'eyes' on the boat. The EMS is a tool used for collecting scientific data in the absence of human observers.

Fiji has proactively pioneered the EMS on our longline fleet, especially for fishing along the sea, which is difficult to monitor with human observers. This includes the detection of illegal discarding of fish, retention of prohibited species, mistreatment of bycatch such as sharks, turtles or seabirds, and unauthorised transshipment or transferring of fish to another boat at sea.

Fiji's strategy on combating IUU is comprehensive and includes several other vital initiatives and agreements beyond satellite tracking and cameras. This agreement includes the Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA), and Fiji has been a party to PSMA since 2019. As a significant regional hub for tuna landing and processing, this is a critical choke point. Fiji exercises its right to implement strict measures for pre-inspection checks and boarding of all fishing vessels entering our port, and to verify landed-catch against the documentation provided.

Fiji is transitioning rapidly from paper logbooks to electronic reporting, with both captains required to submit daily catalogues via satellite tablets, also known as e-logs, while at sea. This real-time data transmission aims to improve efficiency, combat illegal fishing, and increase transparency.

Fiji is an active participant in the Niue Treaty Subsidiary Agreement, which allows for flexible cooperation in monitoring and enforcement. It enables Fiji to share resources and data with neighbouring Pacific countries, conduct joint surface patrols, and even authorise patrol boats from neighbouring allied nations to conduct enforcement activities within Fiji's waters under certain conditions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while technology is essential, physical presence remains important. Fiji conducts surface patrols using Fiji Navy assets. Additionally, Fiji depends heavily on regional defense partners such as Australia, New Zealand, France, and the United States through the Forum Fisheries Agency, such as Operation Tui Moana, Operation NAS, Operation Big Eye, Operation Island Chief and Operation Kurukuru, to provide aerial surveillance support. Maritime patrol aircraft offer vital visual confirmation of vessel identities and activities detected by the video monitoring system.

Mr. Speaker, even though the inshore area lacks support for advanced technological monitoring and surveillance, it benefits from strong sectorial cooperation and on-the-ground surveillance with enforcement agencies, customary fishing rights owners and concerned citizens to track illegal activities within the inshore areas, including markets and outlets. The Ministry acknowledges the support from concerned citizens in providing information on and reporting illegal

activities.

In partnership with our enforcement agencies, the Ministry has been conducting surveillance and enforcement operations across Fiji's inshore waters. Enforcement actions resulted in investigation and case filings, court hearings, and the delivery of specialised capacity building training, as well as intelligence and awareness products.

The Ministry will continue to strengthen intelligence gathering, surveillance and compliance reporting, as well as targeted community awareness efforts to support voluntary compliance. To improve operations and combat IUU in the inshore area, the Ministry undertakes interagency cooperation, including established information gathering mechanisms, such as the secondment arrangement with the Fiji Navy and enhanced collaboration with divisional enforcement teams and key partners.

The IUU fishing will continue to increase, as it links with trafficking and other human rights violations. With that, the Ministry will continue to improve and increase surveillance and enforcement through advanced technology and cooperation.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, Sir, investment in tailor-made advanced technology for a localised method that fits the inshore small-scale commercial fishing boats to increase the combat against IUU in the inshore area. In complementing the current work on the ground and to effectively address and combat IUU, the Ministry is advancing efforts to improve transparency in our fisheries management and governance. Fisheries transparency is about public availability of information on our fishing industry and meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders, such as communities and partners, in the decision-making process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is progressing in seafood supply chain traceability, which allows consumers and regulators to trace fish from the point-of-capture to the point-of-sale and to consumers. It is about improving market access for sustainable products, strengthening food security and standards, and meeting international regulatory requirements to contribute to a sustainable fisheries sector and stronger economic growth.

The Ministry of Fisheries is mandated to manage our fisheries waters, to ensure the sustainability and health of our fishery stock and associated biodiversity for the wellbeing of all Fijians. The Ministry is committed to enhancing its efforts to fight IUU fishing, demonstrating Fiji's position on a responsible ocean stewardship and ensuring a safe, secure and a prosperous future for all Fijians.

MR. SPEAKER.- I will now invite the Leader of the Opposition, or his designate, for his response.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the Ministerial Statement delivered by the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry. I thank the honourable Minister for the detailed delivery that she made on her Statement this morning on combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing within Fiji's fisheries waters.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable Minister has articulated the various issues that cover IUU, and she has highlighted the very issues regarding the tools that are available and used by the Ministry of Fisheries to monitor maritime activities in real time and coordinated targeted enforcement operations. She has also highlighted the operational efforts to ensure comprehensive compliance within our vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the areas that she has alluded to, there is a concerted effort by the Ministry of Fisheries and the Government to try to regulate and protect the vast EEZ that we have. She has highlighted the Fisheries Surveillance Centre in Lami. She has also highlighted the VMS and the EMS that are installed on board fishing vessels that fish within our areas. She has also highlighted the Port State Measures, which is basically another avenue that Fiji can coordinate and relate to the fishing activities within our EEZ, by making sure that vessels that come into our harbour are checked and ensure that they carry out legal activities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, fishing in areas of Fiji which cover unregulated fishing are mainly in areas that are not allowed to be harvested due to conservation or management measures, and fishing that are carried out in a manner that is not consistent with State or international law. I think the consequences of Fiji not being able to carry out this will result in environmental damage, economic impact, and social and security threats.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in combating IUU, the honourable Minister has highlighted the various agencies that Fiji works with to be able to assist and monitor the fishing activities within Fiji's EEZ. She has highlighted the assistance from Australia, New Zealand, the United States as well as France, in monitoring and providing the air cover that is available to the Government and Ministry of Fisheries, to assist them to monitor with the vast EEZ that Fiji has.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I basically want to highlight a matter for IUU to the honourable Minister, which covers the vessels that are licensed and are qualified and legal to fish within our EEZ. I think she has highlighted VMS as one of the areas that she is trying to monitor. Illegal fishing vessels in Fiji also carry out illegal activities and that is why the Ministry of Fisheries has Observers and an electronic monitoring camera that is mounted in each vessel. If I may suggest, honourable Minister, it is important that we monitor our legal fishing vessels that do illegal activities within their fishing operations.

You have highlighted the Port State Measures that have been carried out and this is a secondary exercise that you can ensure that fish or species that are being caught are being allowed by specific vessels that are legally licensed to fish in our EEZ. Thank you, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we now move to the next item on our Order Paper, that is, Questions. In respect to the first question, I have been informed this morning that the Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry's brother sadly passed yesterday. That is the reason why he is not with us today and for the rest of the week. So, Question No. 298/2025, directed to the honourable Minister will be deferred to a later date and the Business Committee will deal with it accordingly.

The second Oral Question - Question No. 267/2025, has been withdrawn by honourable Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure. Therefore, we will move on to the third Oral Question.

(Question No. 267/2025 withdrawn)

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

Social Protection Scheme – Informal Sector Workers
(Question No. 268/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations inform Parliament whether there are plans to develop a Social Protection Scheme for workers in the informal sector?

HON. A.D. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. Sir, before I respond to the Question, I would like to pay tribute to the former Permanent Secretary for Labour, Mr. Taito Roba Waqa, who passed away last week. He served on various Boards, including the National Training and Productivity Centre (NTPC) Board of which I was the chairman at one time.

He also served diligently on the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) Board, Amalgamated Telecom Holdings Limited (ATH) Board, Employment Relations Advisory Board, the National Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Board (NOSHAB), and the National Employment Centre (NEC) and other Boards. Mr. Waqa led the labour reforms from early 1990s and was instrumental in modernising the labour legislations. May his soul rest in peace in the heavenly abode.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the International Labour Organization (ILO) defines social protection as a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout people's lives. It is considered a universal human right and includes areas like health, employment and other social benefits.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a bread-and-butter issue, and the Coalition Government has plans in place to ensure that Fijian workers are covered in terms of social protection.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Employment Relations Act 2007 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1996 cover workers in the informal sector in the following areas:

- (1) Minimum Wage
They are entitled to minimum wages and other entitlements.
- (2) Leave and Meal Allowance
They are entitled to annual leave and meal allowances. The Coalition Government has, a couple of years ago, increased the minimum wages and 10 sectorial wages as well.
- (3) Safe Work Environment
They are also entitled to a safe and healthy work environment, proper equipment and proper personal protection gear. There are compliance procedures in place that we enforce to ensure that these workers are not deprived of their fundamental employment rights.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is currently working on the employment laws reform and plans to formulate regulations to support the Employment Relations Bill to further strengthen workers' social protection entitlements.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are also in the process of establishing the 11th Sectorial Wages Council. There are 10 Wages Councils that we have restored and now the 11th one, which will include workers who are not covered by the 10 current Wages Councils. These provisions are in addition to the existing social protection schemes provided by various Government agencies such as education, social welfare, health, subsidy on water, electricity and income tax threshold of \$30,000. All those who earn below \$30,000 do not pay any tax in this country, and that is almost 80 percent of our wage earners.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a supplementary question to the Minister; how is the Ministry assisting those who have lost their jobs in the informal sector? Is there any specific separate scheme, such as the unemployment fund, where members can access until they find another employment?

HON. A.D. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a provision for redundancy payment by employers if workers are laid off. That is the current provision.

Latest Developments by MEPC
(Question No. 269/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport update Parliament on the latest developments by the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), under the International Maritime Organization (IMO), in terms of transition to renewable energy?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the outset, I wish to acknowledge the important work undertaken by the Fiji Delegation to COP30 in Belém, Brazil, which was led by honourable Mosese Bulitavu, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and honourable Naisa Tuinaceva, the Assistant Minister for Public Works, Transport and Meteorological Services .

The Fiji delegation played a significant role in advancing global conversations on climate ambition, particularly regarding emission reductions across all major sectors. COP30 reaffirmed that achieving the 1.5-degree Celsius goal requires urgent mitigation efforts in maritime transport, a sector critical to Fiji's trade, connectivity and inter-island mobility.

The outcomes of COP30 strongly emphasise alignment with negotiations at the International Maritime Organization (IMO), recognising the IMO as the specialised UN agency mandated to regulate shipping emissions. Thus, the work undertaken at COP30 directly complements and reinforces Fiji's engagement in the IMO, particularly through the Maritime Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) and the development of the Net Zero Framework.

The second extraordinary session of the MEPC was held from 14th to 17th October, 2025, at the IMO Headquarters in London, with participation from 127 member States, including the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), including Fiji. The meeting was critical for advancing the global agenda for decarbonising international shipping. The session was followed by the 20th Intersessional Working Group on Green House Gas Emissions, which met to further technical work required to support the IMO's climate commitments.

The IMO's Net Zero Framework (NZF), agreed in principle at MEPC, proposes a global approach to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions from shipping by or around 2050. It introduces a global fuel standard to progressively limit the carbon intensity of marine fuels and global emissions pricing mechanisms, which ships pay levies based on carbon intensity. Ships using high carbon fuel should pay US\$380 per tonne of CO₂-equivalent emissions, while lower carbon exceedances attracted US\$100 per tonne.

Ships operating on Zero and Near-Zero (ZNZ) fuels would be eligible for rewards through the IMO Net-Zero Fund. For Fiji, alongside PSIDS, and the wider 6PAC+ Coalition, which strongly supported the adoption of the Net-Zero Framework (NZF). Our delegation emphasised the critical importance for maintaining the 1.5 degrees pathway and ensuring a just and equitable transition for vulnerable developing States.

Despite the strong advocacy, the NZF was not adopted. The decision was deferred by one year, following a vote of 57 to 49, reflecting deep divisions over whether the NZF should proceed under the IMO's longstanding acceptance procedure or through explicit acceptance, which several major economies argued was necessary due to technical scale and the redistributive nature of the proposed fund.

It is important to note that a number of countries that voted against the adoption of the NZF did so under considerable pressure exerted by more economically powerful member States, whose geopolitical and commercial interests influenced the voting outcome. This significantly impacted the ability of the IMO to reach a timely agreement on a framework that is vital for the decarbonisation of global shipping, and safeguarding the interests of vulnerable nations, such as Fiji.

Much of the session was consumed by procedural debates. Several member States questioned whether International Convention for the Prevention of Pollutions from Ships (MARPOL) Annex VI, has the legal mandate to administer a global economic mechanism, while others sought assurances on revenue allocation, technology transfer and capacity-building for developing nations.

Concerns also arose regarding transparency and informal consultations, which contributed to mistrust and, ultimately, prevented consensus on adopting the NZF. Following the adjournment, the Inter-Sessional Working Group (ISWG) proceeded under its mandate from MPEC. Despite uncertainties, discussions advanced on guidelines needed to implement the NZF, such as the refinement of the Life Cycle Green House Gas (GHG) Assessment Framework and the development of the terms of reference for the 5th IMO GHG study.

Fiji's position on ZNZ fuels, reward mechanisms, governance structures and representation were strongly reflected in the Working Group's report. Fiji also joined the newly established NZF Supporters Group, coordinated by Mexico and the United Kingdom, to strengthen coordination ahead of the reconvened session in October 2026.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the delay in adopting the NZF carried significant implications for Fiji's maritime transport system. The NZF would have unlocked critical climate finance to modernise Fiji's fleet, support hybrid and electrical vessel technologies, and expand solar-powered jetty infrastructure across the islands. Its postponement delays this much-needed support.

The absence of a clear global regulatory pathway also creates uncertainty for shipping operators, slowing investment in energy-efficient vessels and renewable maritime technologies. Delays in deploying zero-emission vessels internationally also hinders Fiji's domestic maritime transition, affecting alignment with our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) - the transport decarbonisation implementation strategy and the transport sector masterplan. Furthermore, without a global levy on high-carbon maritime fuels, Fiji remains vulnerable to volatile oil prices, with great costs in inter-island travel and the long-term sustainability of the Government's shipping franchise scheme.

In conclusion, despite the setback, the MEPC remains resolute in its climate leadership and its commitment to safeguarding the interests of vulnerable States. Fiji will continue to champion globalisation and multilateralism within the IMO process, recognising that only through a strong, cooperative and rules-based international system can we ensure fair, ambitious, equitable, just, and science-aligned outcomes for the global maritime sector.

Fiji will continue to work closely with our Pacific partners, the NZF Supporters Group, and the wider international community to advocate for the timely adoption of the NZF at the reconvened extraordinary session in 2026, with the ambition to firmly align to the 1.5-degree limit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform to this august House that Fiji will continue to maintain an active presence in all upcoming negotiations. Fiji will be represented at the ISWG-GHG meeting scheduled for the 20th to 24th April, 2026, and subsequently, MEPC 84th Session in April, and we will continue to reinforce our positions on transparency, a just and equitable transition, enhanced support for SIDS and the urgent need for global measures to decarbonise international shipping. We will continue with the engagement. We will ensure that our national interests, regional priorities and the long-term maritime resilience objectives are strongly reflected in the global decision-making process.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his detailed explanation. I know that for Fiji, it is a great challenge to go with Net-Zero 2050. Being 25 years away and with global challenges by the big countries that service the shipping routes, I understand the situation that the honourable Minister has stated this morning.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the honourable Minister if he has considered actually deriving maximum returns on the climate finance, while discussing this issue. It is just something that I thought I should ask the honourable Minister this morning.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as already explained, we had also prepared concept papers on various projects, including on decarbonisation of the maritime sector. The levy is one of the options, but the negotiations continue, and it will take time. So, in the meantime, we are looking at other angles in terms of approaching climate financing and that was one of the tasks for our Assistant Minister to COP30 with the honourable Minister for Environment and Climate Change. I would like to thank them, and I believe that not only with this one but in the last COP, we have engaged in that regard for the various climate financing avenues for the various sectors in the Ministry, including maritime and transport.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a real shame that the countries that have led to this global climate catastrophe are now putting in the roadblocks. I think they have been referred to in the past as the 'coalition of the selfish', in terms of trying to put a halt to the carbon zero targets.

I am just thinking, Mr Speaker, Sir, in terms of trying to get the financing, is there any sort of process or it just for the government ships? I know we have a lot of our Government shipping that are quite outmoded. Is there any programme to try to move them, at least, because we have our NDC targets, and transport is the biggest source of emission. Are there any plans in particular for our Government shipping to move towards carbon zero by 2030? Is there any sort of timeline or some projects in line for that?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not an easy process, because when you talk about decarbonisation, it involves both the fuel and also the design of the ships, including the technologies relating to renewable energy, whether it is for sail or engine. For government ships, it would be uneconomical to rejig the ships to some sort of renewable energy mode in terms of fuel.

Moving forward, we have already signed an agreement with the Japanese Government, together with the Ministry of Rural Development, for the provision of a new ship, not only for our government services, but especially for disaster management. That incorporates some of the issues we are talking about in terms of more cost-effective and efficient fuels moving forward, and elements of solar energy. That is the way we are moving forward - acquisition of new ships, which are more aligned with the latest fuels in terms of energy efficiency and also incorporating renewable energy in some of the operations of the ships.

Enrolment Criteria for Year 9 Students
(Question No. 270/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Education inform Parliament on the enrolment criteria used by Government Secondary Schools to enrol Year 9 students?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are 11 Government secondary schools, and all these Government schools have collaboratively established a standard and transparent set of enrolment guidelines to ensure fairness and equity.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a standard application form for all Government schools has been developed and introduced by the Ministry of Education since 2024. It will be utilised by students applying for new intakes into the respective Government schools. These forms are distributed to students and parents and guardians through the Ministry of Education Headquarters, Divisional Offices, District Offices, and also from their respective Government schools.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is important to understand that over the years, high-performing Government schools have always been sought after. Some of these schools are:

- (1) Natabua High School;
- (2) Labasa College;
- (3) Queen Victoria School (QVS);
- (4) Ratu Kadavulevu School (RKS);
- (5) Adi Cakobau School (ACS);
- (6) Suva Grammar School;
- (7) Nasinu Secondary;
- (8) Sila Central High School;
- (9) Vunisea Secondary School; and
- (10) Bucalevu Secondary School.

Usually, for those above-mentioned schools, the Heads of Schools follow the Government set enrolment criteria, but also look at other issues, like the quality of marks attained in the normal national examinations and determine these, along with other criteria that may include sports abilities and other leadership skills and attributes.

A lot of Government schools, Mr. Speaker, Sir, set standards to ensure that high passing rates for their schools are not compromised and Government, being the controlling authority, expects a high performance from these respective schools whereby students, teachers and Heads of Schools, and with the reintroduction of Board of Governors, are closely observed to ensure maximum return of Government investments.

The following criteria have been set to guide the selection process for students who have been accepted to enroll in the respective Government schools, and I believe the honourable Member is fully aware of these standard criteria.

(1) Academic Merit

Students must attain a passing mark for Year 8 Annual National Examination. All selected students will undergo a standard interview process set by the Heads of School and monitored by the Permanent Secretary for Education and their respective officers in Divisions and Districts. Benchmarking is important in enrolling students into high

schools. The Ministry of Education maintains benchmarking for Government schools at a minimum of 250 marks, which is based on English, plus the best four subjects. A pass of 50 marks in English, plus four other subjects in which good marks may guarantee entry into schools.

Depending on the high volume of applicants and marks attained, Government schools are understood to select students to also fit into their expected outputs, which primarily should promote the provision of quality education and lifelong learning skills.

(2) Disadvantage for Maritime, Rural and Remote Schools for Boarding

All Government schools have boarding facilities, except Sila Central High School and Suva Grammar School. Priority for boarding is usually given to students from maritime and rural, remote primary schools that have no access to a secondary school nearby or where students face extreme difficulty reaching the nearest secondary school. At times, schools will also pay consideration to the background of a child, who may need to be in a boarding facility, due to their home environment or family situation, for their safety and upkeep.

(3) Socially Disadvantaged Students' Welfare Referrals

Government schools maintain a quota system that also guides the enrolment of students who are socially disadvantaged. Referrals from the Ministry of Education, from the Ministry of Social Welfare and some NGOs, through the Divisional Commissioners, Divisional Education Officers and other relevant organisations may be considered, provided proper supporting documents are submitted. This reflects the ongoing government's commitment principles of leaving no child behind.

It is also important to note that respective Government schools also maintain a quota for landowners' children where schools are built. Consideration is also given for quotas for old scholars, who are important stakeholders of schools, as they continue to be involved in maintaining the schools. Likewise, consideration is given for government ministries, to accommodate the civil servants' children and others who may be affected by parental transfers, et cetera.

(4) Day-Scholar Priorities

After enrolling maritime and rural remote students, schools will admit their day scholars based on the applications and priority is given to feeder schools without access to a nearby secondary school, siblings of current students or children of teachers currently teaching at the school. Through these measures undertaken by the Ministry of Education to ensure that the Year 9 enrolment process in Government schools remains objective, equitable and accessible to all eligible students.

Mr. Speaker, all Year 8 students for 2025 who wish to get enrolled in Government schools in the 2026 academic year, have been given equal opportunities to apply. Based on the criteria mentioned earlier, heads of Government schools will finalise a list, which has been submitted to the Ministry of Education for approval, and the announcement will be made on the Fijian radio programme, "*Na Domo Ni Vuli*".

HON. H. CHAND.- I would like to thank the honourable Minister for the response. I hope there is no condition attached like the enrolment levy. The criteria on paper, honourable Minister, is very clear, but adherence is an issue. We have seen that yesterday. My question to the honourable Minister is, how will the Ministry ensure the school heads adhere to the criteria and the enrolment is carried out fairly, without favouritism, so that the deserving students are enrolled?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have vetted the process now, not as during your time when you were the head. As I mentioned, the process that we have now introduced promotes inclusiveness and equity and fairness in terms of selection of students into Government schools.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his response, especially with the criteria of enrolment of Year 9 students into Government secondary schools. My supplementary question is related to Year 9 students being enrolled in schools and not directly to Government school. My question is, why has MGM School placed a compulsory enrolment levy of \$200 to \$250 to be enrolled in Year 9? It is an issue, and I am just bringing it to the concern of the relevant Minister.

MR. SPEAKER.- I recall that this question was asked yesterday and was answered, not in particular the school that was involved, but the levy of \$250 was asked. If I can recall, the Minister had responded accordingly, and it is all over the media today, if I am reading everything right. So, your question is?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- My question, is anything going to be done concerning this compulsory enrolment levy of \$200 to \$250 for Year 9 students?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, after Parliament yesterday, we received certain calls, people confirming that the school is still imposing the \$200 to \$250. It is just a concern, and if the honourable Minister for Education could revisit this particular school, because they are definitely not following that memo.

MR. SPEAKER: What is the question, honourable Member?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.-My question is, why is Mahatma Gandhi Memorial High School placed a compulsory enrolment levy of 200 to \$250 for Year 9 students to be enrolled?

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, do you wish to answer that question?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- It has been answered yesterday.

MR. SPEAKER.- In fact, it has been answered yesterday. If I am reading correctly the exchanges yesterday, it did say that it is not in order for any school to levy any fee. That is the answer.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- They continue to levy.

MR. SPEAKER.- They continue to levy, honourable Minister.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned yesterday, the levy is on voluntary basis, it is not compulsory.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I think the answer is clear enough, and if it needs to be taken up further, then it is outside of the parameters of this House.

Honourable Members, at this point, we will suspend our proceedings for lunch, and Parliament will resume at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.22 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.35 p.m.

Inventories for Potential Marine Products
(Question No. 271/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry inform Parliament on whether there are plans to evaluate and provide inventories for all potential marine products in all *i Qoliqoli* boundaries around Fiji?

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. Yes, the Ministry has plans to evaluate and provide inventories for all potential marine products. Currently, the Ministry, in collaboration with our partners, has developed and reviewed the Fiji fishery resource profiles on the information for the management of 44 most important species groups. These include high-value fisheries commodities such as sea cucumber, groupers, coral trout, and freshwater mussels, to name a few.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- A supplementary question, can the honourable Minister enlighten the House on some of the outcomes and success stories of the inventories on fisheries development and conservation programmes that have been carried out?

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- I thank the honourable Member again for his supplementary question. A few of the key outcomes of assessment of inventories that have been conducted by the Ministry include:

- (1) seasonal ban on *Kawakawa* and *Donu* from June to September to protect the stock during the breeding season and allow sea population to recover and support livelihoods and the economy;
- (2) seasonal ban on the harvesting and trade of sea cucumber to allow the population to recover and continue to undertake its ecological role and support livelihoods;
- (3) protection of critical spawning and breeding sites, such as the Shark Reef Marine Reserve in Serua and the Naiqoro Fish Aggregation Passage in Kadavu; and
- (4) the establishment of Marine Protected Areas to support marine ecotourism and integrated with mariculture activities, such as the Tavarua Island Marine Reserve in Malolo.

Strategy for Construction and Delivery – Public Housing Units
(Question No. 272/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government update Parliament on the Government's specific strategy for the construction and delivery of genuinely affordable public housing units over the next three years, to meet the demand from young families and first-time buyers?

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

The Ministry of Housing has set clear and ambitious formal strategies from 2025-2029 based on the 2025-2029 National Development Plan, to strengthen home ownership, upgrade informal settlements and expand access to affordable and social housing. Over the next three to five years, we aim to assist up to 1,250 first homeowners, upgrade six informal settlements, relocate three high-

risk communities, acquire 300 acres of land for future housing development, and deliver seven major land-housing infrastructure projects. These indicators reflect our commitment to improving quality, safety, accessibility of housing for all Fijians.

For the moment, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government recognises that access to affordable housing is both a constitutional obligation and a critical pillar of our National Development Plan. Guided by our National Housing Policy, 2025-2030 launched earlier this year, we have set clear national targets aligned with SDG 11 to ensure inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable communities.

The Ministry's approach combines new housing projects with Housing Authority, as well as Public Rental Board (PRB) with informal settlements upgrade by the Ministry of Housing. The Government's strategy is built on three core pillars:

- (1) increasing supply of affordable housing units and service works;
- (2) prioritising low-income and first-time home seekers in all locations; and
- (3) accelerating construction through a clear and time-bound delivery schedule.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Housing in close collaboration with Housing Authority have agreed on Housing Authority Integrated Service and Delivery Plan for each developed site. With this, the Government establishes a firm, constructive pipeline intended for the next five years.

The Housing Authority's delivery plan shows a strong and steady increase in housing supply over the next five years. In 2025, the Authority will deliver 203 housing units and 362 service lots, totaling 565 outputs. This increase in 2026 to 513 units and 152 lots, bringing the output to 765. The largest delivery is expected to occur between 2027 and 2029, with 2,157 new homes and 2,107 lots, totalling 4,264 outputs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, overall, from 2025 to 2029, the Authority is set to deliver 2,873 housing units and 2,621 service lots, a combined output of 5,434, certainly the most ambitious housing programme to be undertaken. To supplement these plans, the Authority has designed its delivery timelines and first-rate construction timelines to ensure transparency and predictability.

To keep construction costs low and ensure that young families access affordable homes, the Authority has adopted a set of standardised and practical house designs for model homes. These plans are specifically tailored for starter families and focus on functionality, durability, and climate resilience. The model home plans offer two-bedroom homes sized at 71 and 72 square metres, an ideal entry-level option for small families or first-time buyers.

For larger households, the three-bedroom home plans are at 110 and 120 square metres. These standard house plans reduce construction time and cost, while maintaining quality. They provide sufficient living space for growing families, incorporate energy-efficient features and meet modern building standards to withstand Fiji's changing climate conditions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these model homes cost approximately \$140,000 and have re-payment terms up to 30 years or until retirement age for those who wish to finance their mortgage with any financing institutions in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am also proud to announce that the Housing Authority is already offering the lowest lending interest rates in Fiji and now reduced its interest rates even further with zero deposit. This bold step is aimed at making mortgage financing more affordable, accessible, and ultimately within the reach of more Fijian families striving to own a home.

Over the next three years, the Public Rental Board (PRB) will also expand its housing stock to meet the rising demand for affordable rentals especially in urban areas. This work aligns with the Fiji National Housing Policy 2025-2030. Moreover, PRB aims to acquire 60 acres of land and develop 100 new rental units to strengthen affordable housing supply and reduce reliance on informal settlements.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, by 2027, PRB aims to reduce housing stress among low-income households, improving living conditions across the estates and create stronger pathways for tenants to move into permanent housing. This great approach ensures that housing policy is not only about infrastructure but also about empowering communities and building capacity for long-term sustainability.

The Ministry continues with administering the First Home Ownership Initiative Programme that has transformed the lives of thousands of Fijian families since its inception in 2014. The programme was designed with a clear purpose to make home ownership a reality for low and middle-income earners in Fiji. For the past decade, this initiative has provided more than 4,400 households with grants totalling \$55.2 million, enabling families to secure their first home or land lease.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the impact is clear. Thousands of families now have secure homes and many more are on the path to home ownership, but we acknowledge the challenges ahead. Demand still outpaces supply. That is why the First Home Ownership Initiative will continue to evolve with increased funding, streamlined processes and partnership with private sector developers to accelerate delivery.

The Coalition Government will remain committed to ensuring first-home buyers, especially families to have access to affordable housing opportunities. We will ensure that owning a home is not a privilege for the few, but a right for every hardworking Fijian family.

Proxy Means Test for Fiji's Vulnerable Households
(Question No. 273/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection update Parliament on the Proxy Means Test model, and how it will enhance the targeting of support to Fiji's most vulnerable households?

HON. S. KIRAN.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank, honourable Qereqeretabua for the question regarding the Proxy Means Test. Fiji's Social Assistance Protection System is designed to provide support and essential services to individuals and households experiencing poverty, vulnerability or hardship. The system follows a life-course approach in ensuring that support is available at different stages of life, that is. pre-born, childhood, adulthood, old age, disability and during periods of shock.

Broadly, Fiji's Social Assistance Programmes fall into two categories - categorical programmes and poverty targeted programmes. For Categorical Social Protection Schemes, which is based on categories of demography, these programmes provide support based on demographic characteristics or special vulnerabilities rather than the household income. So, for example, the Social Pension Scheme provides a monthly allowance to older persons aged 65 years and above who are not receiving any form of pension.

The Disability Allowance Scheme supports individuals living with disabilities to help meet the basic needs. The Care and Protection Allowance provides assistance to children in vulnerable situations, including those on foster care and under the care of their relatives.

Then there is a specific Food Voucher Programme for rural pregnant mothers that supports pregnant women in rural and maritime to ensure improved maternal nutrition. Of course, the Transport Assistance Scheme, aligning to SPS and DAS criteria, provides additional support to older persons and persons with disabilities with travelling allowance. These programmes are widely recognised as performing well and providing broad coverage to key vulnerable groups.

The second category is the Poverty Targeted Social Assistance Programme, which is the Family Assistance Scheme. It is poverty-targeted cash transfer programme and supports 23,000 beneficiaries. The Scheme aims to support households by complementing the existing source of livelihood to ensure a minimum standard of living. Eligibility is determined by a Proxy Means Test or PMT, and special consideration categories to identify the poorest and most vulnerable households.

The Family Assistance Scheme serves as the safety net of last resort, complementing the other categorical programmes by capturing poor households who may not qualify for support under other programmes. Currently under the Ministry, 108,000 beneficiaries are benefiting from the two different programmes.

If I come to the question, Fiji's Social Assistance Programme contributes, of course, to the national vision of reducing poverty, strengthening resilience and ensuring that all Fijians enjoy a basic level of social protection. The current social protection reforms, including the update to the current PMT model and ongoing investments in administrative systems, aim to ensure that programmes remain targeted, equitable and responsive to evolving household needs.

The need to update the PMT model has become increasingly urgent. The PMT currently in use was developed from the 2008-2009 Household Income and Expenditure Survey. Over the past 16 years, Fiji's economy, technology, asset ownership and household expenditure patterns have changed significantly. As a result, the original \$1,400 Fijian eligibility threshold set in 2012 to target the poorest 10 percent of households no longer reflects today's realities.

To address this, the Ministry has updated the PMT using the most recent 2019-2020 HIES data. The revised PMT uses a shorter and more relevant set of proxy variables and is projected to reduce targeting errors by 7 to 8 percentage points, decreasing errors from 57 percent to 49 percent in urban areas and from 65 percent to 58 percent in rural areas. While PMT-based approaches worldwide faces some inherent challenges, Fiji's updated model now performs at a level consistent with international experience.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to emphasise that PMT is only one part of our hybrid target approach. The Ministry will continue to utilise special consideration categories for assessment of cases, such as for nomads, street dwellers, individuals with chronic illness and caregivers of persons with disabilities. Consultations with frontline Social Welfare Officers have confirmed that these provisions remain essential to ensure that vulnerable groups who may not meet the PMT threshold still receive the support they need.

In the immediate term, the Ministry will implement this updated PMT model and integrate the revised welfare score assessment form into the new Integrated Beneficiary Management System I spoke about yesterday. This system is being developed to strengthen the administration of the Family Assistance Scheme (FAS) and our broader social protection portfolio.

At the same time, the Ministry will continue to limit the use of the PMT to the Family Assistance Scheme only. Given that Fiji's other categorical programmes are performing well, the FAS is designed to catch households who fall through the gaps of the life course, social protection floor and the updated Proxy Means Test will help ensure that this assistance is directed to those who

need it the most.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the PMT update exercise has also presented broader recommendations. These include indexing the Family Assistance Scheme eligibility threshold to inflation, to ensure it consistently represents the poorest 10 percent of households, that is equivalent to raising the threshold from the existing, based on the current HIES data adjusted to 2025 prices. Expanding the categories for special consideration to better capture vulnerable groups that fall outside existing programmes and reassess the existing caseload of households whose situation may have improved through a phased well-communicated and grievance-supported process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, consultations undertaken with the Ministry of Finance, National Planning Teams, Fiji Bureau of Statistics and frontline welfare teams have strengthened the robustness of this updated model and the reform recommendations. In the long term, the Ministry will also explore options for redesigning the Family Assistance Scheme to reduce reliance on PMT, only targeting to examine the feasibility and value for money of other approaches, such as higher coverage child benefits that will reduce the targeting errors and close remaining social protection gaps.

The Ministry also commits to updating the PMT every five years in line with the release of new HIES data. This will ensure that the targeting of the Family Assistance Scheme continuously reflects the evolving socio-economic conditions of our people. The implementation of the updated PMT model is based on more recent and representative household data that will provide a modest and important movement in the accuracy of targeting. Combined with our hybrid approach and future threshold adjustments, these reforms will help ensure that support is increasingly directed to Fiji's most vulnerable households in alignment with the vision of the National Development Plan and the Government's commitment to reducing poverty.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, what specific challenges has the Ministry encountered in rolling out this model, specifically in rural and maritime areas?

HON. S. KIRAN.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, like I have said, at the moment, this PMT has been based on the assessment and the HIES data. It is now being implemented. We are just working towards it, and we have good support systems within the maritime and rural sectors, and in future, I will be able to provide further updates.

HON. V. NATH.- A follow-up question, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and before I ask the real question, I want to salute you for your emotional speech in the morning in welcoming the guests from Kabara. In fact, I have been to Kabara once and have also seen the hardship there, and not only in Kabara, but the other parts of the Lau Group. How is the Ministry going to cover these areas?

MR. SPEAKER.- I hope you are not bringing us into the debate.

(Laughter)

HON. S. KIRAN.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the rural and maritime areas are very well covered at the moment. We have officers who already assess, we process the older persons, the disability, and the child protection allowance across the country.

Rural and maritime areas are not isolated in terms of our service provision. We have District Officers and Social Welfare Officers in those areas covering, and largely the money is transferred through the postal services, and we have continuous monitoring of this. We do not necessarily have a coverage issue.

We do have other challenges, for example, here the money can come into your account very quickly, there it goes through postal services. We do have challenges, for example, the maritime may not come to supermarkets here; they have their own canteens. However, the rural and maritime areas are well covered under the social protection schemes.

Quality Standards for Meat Sold in Supermarkets
(Question No. 274/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services update Parliament on what Health Inspectors are doing to ensure that meat sold in supermarkets meets quality criteria?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am thankful for this opportunity to update Parliament on the crucial role that our Health Inspectors play in ensuring that the meat sold in supermarkets and stores meets the established quality criteria.

Firstly, the role of the Health Inspectors are stipulated under the Food and Safety Act 2003 and the Food and Safety Regulations 2009, alongside relevant Codex-based national standards. These laws and standards aim to safeguard public health by ensuring that meat products are safe, wholesome and of high quality.

To achieve this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Health Inspectors engage in a variety of activities, including routine inspections of supermarkets and cold storage facilities. Health Inspectors from the Ministry and Municipal Councils conduct scheduled and unannounced inspections to verify that all meat products are sourced from approved suppliers, properly labelled for their correct temperatures and displayed in sanitary conditions.

Secondly, monitoring meat handling, processing and display. Inspectors check that the meat is handled hygienically, free from contamination and protected from temperature abuse. This includes verification of expiry dates, packaging integrity and compliance with hygiene protocols by staff.

Also, on the verification of import compliance, for imported meat products, the Ministry through the Food Unit, ensures that all consignments undergo border verification, including document checks, inspection and sampling when required. This ensures products entering Fiji meet international safety requirements. They also do sampling and laboratory analysis. When necessary, inspectors collect samples for microbiological and chemical testing to confirm that meat products meet the prescribed standards for safety, quality and wholesomeness.

Also, most importantly, the enforcement of actions. In instances of non-compliance, our Health Inspectors have the authority to take necessary enforcement actions. This may involve issuing improvement notices, seizing unsafe meat and suspending operations or initiating legal proceedings under the Food and Safety Act. Over the last three years, from 2023 to March this year, we have prosecuted 35 cases, issuing fines, totalling approximately \$25,000.

However, the current Act is quite limited in its scope, for penalising offenders, as it does not include provisions for enforcing fixed penalties or spot fines. As a result, cases can only be prosecuted in a court of law, a process that can take months or even years. The Ministry is currently reviewing this Act with the aim of introducing spot fines for these offences. In the last two years, 35 cases have been prosecuted by Health Inspectors from both, the Health Subdivisions and the Food

Unit. The fines incurred total approximately \$25,000 and contribute to the consolidated funds.

The summary of offences, let me share with the honourable Members of this august House is operating without a Licence (Food and Safety Act Schedule 2 – 16(1)(2)) - 32 cases were reported against various food premises, including coffee shops, takeaways, supermarkets, dairy shops and street food vendors, leading to a total fine of \$20,000. Selling, preparing, packing or conveying food under insanitary conditions. Three cases were identified, further emphasising the need for stringent oversight and adherence to safety standards in retail and catering operations.

I am proud to report that within the last fiscal year alone, we conducted inspections of over 2,600 food establishments. These inspections resulted in the issuance of 372 Abatement Notices and six closing orders illustrating our commitment to upholding health standards. The review of the Food Safety Act, we are finalising the review process. It is essential to address emerging risks involving food systems and gaps in regulatory enforcement.

Furthermore, we continue to enhance our Health Inspectors' Training and promote food and safety standards through collaboration with food business operators and public awareness campaigns that encourage informed consumer choices. Moreover, we are revitalizing our joint meat surveillance programme with the Ministry of Agriculture, enhancing our oversight of meat safety.

As we look to the future, we are excited about the new laboratory facility up in Tamavua, which is set to enhance our testing capacity significantly. Achieving ISO standardization and accreditation is a priority, as we aim for excellence in food safety testing. Until this is realized, we are grateful for the collaboration with the IAS Laboratory at the University of the South Pacific and the Koronivia Laboratory.

Additionally, we recognize the importance of training of our Health Inspectors as prosecutors. With the support from WHO, we will resume vital training sessions in December, facilitated by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. Our approach for planned surveillance includes integrated surveillance operations and collaboration with local municipalities, Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission and other stakeholders to strengthen our food safety oversight.

In summary, our health inspectors are fully engaged in a comprehensive strategy to ensure that the meat available in supermarkets meets rigorous quality criteria. We remain committed to protecting public health and ensuring the highest standards of food safety.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, can you just elaborate a bit more on the sampling and frequency of the inspection of meat for cross-contamination and temperature abuse? I will give you a scenario where some supermarkets, to save cost, would turn off their freezers. The meat will defrost in the morning, and they will turn it back on. How will the Ministry find out these types of practices?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, usually they do it on a case by case basis. Most of the time they go on surprise checks to shops and supermarkets. They usually target situations such as, when there is inconsistent power supply throughout the country, that is when they do their spot checks in the various supermarkets, not only within the ministry but in the municipal council as well. That is something that we work closely together. In overall, they continue to do unscheduled checks whenever needed.

Detection of Fruit Fly on Nanuya Island
(Question No. 275/2025)

HON. I.S. VANAWALU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Agriculture and Waterways update Parliament on how the Ministry is addressing the detection of fruit fly (*Bactrocera facialis*) on Nanuya Island in the Yasawa Group?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the fruit fly (*Bactrocera facialis*) is a native of the Tongan Island Groups. The significant agricultural pest known for its ability to infest a wide range of fruits and vegetable crops. Adult females lay their eggs inside vegetables and ripening fruits, and the developing larvae feeds on the flesh, causing internal damages that leads to premature fruit drop, rot, reduced market quality and substantial post-harvest losses.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, because of its high reproductive rate and ability to spread quickly across regions, this fruit fly poses a major threat to commercial growers, especially in monitoring, quarantine measures and chemical or biological control strategies.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the infestation of this fruit fly is a major concern as it has potential to negatively impact food security, reducing yields, farmer income, disrupting trade and creating long-term economic challenges to the agriculture sector. I wish to inform this august House and the public that the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji has confirmed the presence of this fruit fly on several islands within the Mamanuca and Yasawa Groups. This detection follows routine surveillance activities carried out as part of our ongoing commitment to closely monitoring the spread of the infestation and also to safeguard Fiji's agriculture sector and the natural ecosystem.

While the identification of this pest is a matter of concern, I want to assure the public that the Ministry, together with BAF, has activated the “Biosecurity Emergency Operation” protocol to contain and manage the situation. Our teams have been conducting intensive operations in all affected areas, and this includes intensified field surveillance, targeted trapping using lures, alongside protein-bait spraying, which attracts and suppresses both male and female fruit flies, continuous field assessments and continuous monitoring to ensure that any remaining fruit fly activity is rapidly identified and addressed, and community engagement to minimise the risk of further spread.

I am pleased to report that the latest results show a significant and consistent reduction in trap catches across the islands. This is an important indicator. Trap counts are one of the most reliable measures to indicate fruit fly numbers, and the downward trend clearly demonstrates that the suppression activities are working as intended.

In short, the strategy is effective in lowering fruit fly population, reducing the immediate threats to the island, and supporting our broader goal of preventing long-term establishment of this pest. Mr. Speaker, Sir, movement controls on host fruits remain in effect to reduce the risk of spreading fruit flies into other islands. At the same time, ongoing community awareness efforts, particularly with village leaders and resort operators, help ensure that everyone understands and follows these restrictions.

These combined strategies aim to contain the fruit fly effectively, and they will be reviewed regularly to determine whether they are achieving the desired outcomes, and to decide if any adjustments are needed. Our immediate priority is to safeguard not only Nanuya Island, but also Fiji's fruit and vegetable sector, maintain market access for our exports, and ensure the livelihood of farmers are not adversely impacted. We are collaborating closely with local communities, industry partners, and regional biosecurity experts to put effective control strategies in place.

I urge residents and businesses in the affected areas to cooperate fully with biosecurity officers and to adhere to any movement restrictions or guidelines that may be introduced as part of the response effort. Public awareness materials, and support will be provided to ensure everyone is

informed and able to consider containment efforts.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a “Biosecurity Emergency Declaration” will be issued soon. This will give the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji urgent and expanded legal powers to eradicate and control the fruit fly in Fiji. Once declared under Section 77 of Biosecurity Act 2008, the Minister, on advice from BAF and in consultation with the National Disaster Management Council can designate areas as biosecurity “emergency zones.” This empowers BAF to enforce strict movement controls, prohibiting unregulated transport of potentially infested fruits, plant materials, machinery and equipment.

Biosecurity officers can enter private land to assess pest presence, and BAF can also inspect vehicle or equipment and bring in additional staff to support response efforts. The declaration typically lasts for six months unless extended, and violating BAF’s directions under this declaration can carry legal penalties.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while the operation is continuing, these results should provide confidence to this august House, that the strategy is sound, and the response team are performing exceptionally and the message put in place are delivering the desired effect. Continued vigilance will remain essential, but the control trajectory is strongly positive. I thank all the stakeholders for their cooperation and assure the nation that we are taking all necessary steps to manage this pest and safeguard Fiji’s agriculture sector.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Have there been other threats to the insect infestation in the agriculture sector recently?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we had earlier in the year, an outbreak of fall armyworm, which affected our maize crops but, again, BAF and the Ministry also employed a very effective control programme that reduced the impact of fall armyworm and reduces losses to the crop and also revenue and income.

Written Questions

Visitation by Education Advisors - ECE Centres and Schools (Question No. 276/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Education update Parliament with respect to the following –

- (a) The number of Early Childhood Education Centres that were visited by Early Childhood Education Advisors and Ministry staff in Terms 1 and 2 of 2025, and the purpose of the visit; and
- (b) The number of Primary and Secondary Schools in the Eastern Division that were visited by Education Advisors and Ministry staff in Terms 1 and 2 of 2025, and the purpose of the visit?

¹ HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I submit the written response according to the Standing Order.

¹ Editor’s Note: Reply to Written Question No. 276/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure I.

Desalination Plants in Fiji
(Question No. 277/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport update Parliament on the following –

- (a) the number of desalination plants that are in operation throughout Fiji; and
- (b) their locations per Division?

² HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby provide the answers.

Police Officers Convicted of Drug and Sexual Offences
(Question No. 278/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Policing and Communication inform Parliament on the number of Police Officers who have been convicted of drug and sexual offences from January 2023 to 30th October, 2025?

³ HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I submit my written response according to the question.

MR. SPEAKER.- If I may say so, this is one of the most efficient part of our proceedings - the written questions.

TOWN PLANNING (AMENDMENT) BILL 2025

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the -

- (a) Town Planning (Amendment) Bill 2025 (Bill No. 38 of 2025), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committees of Parliament; and
- (d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 27th November, 2025 but that one hour be given to debate the Bill, with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

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

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this amendment Bill will harmonise our development approval process that links the Town Planning Act 1946 with the Public Health Act 1935. It will also ensure clear and consistent process, removes overlaps and reduces delays, and ensures that building applications will follow a single and coordinated national process.

² Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 277/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure II.

³ Reply to Written Question No. 278/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Policing and Communication, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure III.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these amendments are critical for our national progress, and they directly support our strategic goals. They are comprehensive, legally sound, and meet our national development objectives. It will improve co-ordination across Ministries, as well as boost stakeholder engagement. Therefore, amending this Bill is not just procedure, it is a strategic necessity as it enhances governance and service delivery for all citizens. These proposed amendments introduce some very important changes and demand our immediate attention.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Clause 7 strengthens our development approvals, mandates the Director of Town and Country Planning's consent, also includes input from agencies like the Ministry of Environment as well as Water Authority of Fiji. The amendment will allow for the application of the Act to areas outside of town boundaries. It also covers development outside of town boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Building Permit Approval System (BPAS) transition is vital, and this amendment Bill will allow for the operationalisation of the system. I am expecting to do a soft launch of the system in December 2025. We also expect all Councils to migrate by 20th February, 2026. Therefore, Sir, fast-tracking this Bill is essential and activates these critical systems. It also streamlines developments and safeguards our environment. Also, it ensures modern service provision across our nation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity to present this Bill before the House.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. At the end of the debate, the mover will exercise his right of reply. Are there any intervention and contribution?

I see there is none, so we will have the right of reply from the Minister.

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have no further comments on this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of today's sitting. Parliament will adjourn and meet again tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 3.25 p.m.

ANNEXURE I

**Reply to Written Question No. 276/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education
(Ref. Page 2421)**



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

Reply to honourable Hem Chand's question is as follows:

- (a) The Ministry of Education, through its nine Education Districts, is mandated to provide advisory support to all Early Childhood Education Centres throughout Fiji. In Term 1 and 2 of 2025, a total of 611 Pre-Primary (ECE) Centres were visited across all nine Education Districts.

The purpose of these visitations is aligned with the Ministry's commitments under SDG 4.2 and the Education Strategic Plan under Thematic Area 3 in the Denarau Declaration which prioritises:

- Access and Equity:
Ensuring all children, including those in rural and maritime areas, have access to quality. early learning.
- Quality Assurance:
Monitoring compliance with ECE standards, including teacher qualifications, classroom environment, and child safety.
- Inclusive Education:
Supporting centres to implement inclusive practices for children with diverse learning needs.
- Teacher Support and Monitoring:
Providing onsite pedagogical guidance and classroom practice support.

- (b) The Eastern Division covers some of Fiji's most geographically dispersal maritime zone, including Lomaiviti, Kadavu, Lau, and Rotuma. In Term 1 and 2 of 2025, the number of schools visited in the Eastern Division was as follows:

Primary Schools: 43

Secondary Schools: 7

The key purposes of the visitations to primary and secondary schools were:

- Teacher Support:
Strengthening pedagogy and classroom management through on-site mentoring.
- Infrastructure Assessment:
Identifying schools requiring maintenance or resource upgrades and referring these to the Assets & Infrastructure Services (AIS) Unit.
- Capacity Building:
Delivery of curriculum workshops, including literacy and numeracy refresher training.

- Community Engagement:

Supporting CAPS (Community & Parental Support) meetings to improve parental involvement.

The Ministry also joined the multi-Ministry DFAT-coordinated mission to Rotuma to inspect school resources and conduct feasibility studies for introducing Business Administration and Vocational Agriculture at Rotuma High School.

The Ministry of Education remains committed to strengthening Early Childhood Education, Primary and Secondary education through consistent monitoring, professional learning support, and inclusive education practices. These efforts ensure that all children across Fiji receive quality education and an equitable foundation for lifelong learning.

ANNEXURE II

Reply to Written Question No. 277/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport (Ref. Page 2422)



**MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS,
METEOREOLOGICAL SERVICES AND TRANSPORT
(Hon. Ro F.Q. Tuisawau)**

Reply to honourable Ratu R.S.S. Vakalalabure is as follows:

- (a) Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to update Parliament that there are four small-scale desalination plants strategically installed on our maritime islands across the three regions. These plants have a design capacity to produce between 17,000 and 30,000 litres of clean drinking water per day. The islands where these facilities are located include Viwa Island in the Yasawa group, Kavewa and Kia Islands in Macuata, and Vanuavatu Island in Lau.

At present, only the plant on Vanuavatu Island is operational, while the remaining three require urgent servicing and maintenance, including necessary upgrades to their protective shelters. These plants were commissioned in 2013, and their day-to-day operations have been entrusted to train village water committees, with technical support provided by the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) as and when required.

Regrettably, the operational standards have not been consistently maintained, and this is an area that demands improvement. To address these challenges, spare parts have been procured, and restoration works are scheduled to commence in January 2026. Furthermore, refresher training programmes are being organised to ensure the continuous upskilling of the water committee operators responsible for these desalination plants.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in addition, a large-scale desalination plant, with a design capacity to produce 60,000 litres of clean drinking water per day, is located at Navaca in Southern Taveuni. While the plant remains structurally intact, it has been decommissioned since 2022 due to excessive monthly operational costs, compounded by frequent mechanical breakdowns and leakages within its distribution system.

In the interim, water carting operations continue to ensure that communities in Southern Taveuni have access to safe drinking water. A long-term and sustainable solution has been identified under the Water Sector Strategy 2050, and WAF is actively pursuing this initiative as a matter of urgent priority.

- (b) There are four small-scale desalination plants located on Viwa Island in Yasawa in the Western Division, one each on Kavewa Island and Kia Island in the Northern Division and one on Vanuavatu island in Lau, Eastern division. One large scale desalination plant is located in Navaca on the Southern part of Taveuni.

ANNEXURE III

Reply to Written Question No. 278/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Policing and Communication (Ref. Page 2422)



**MINISTER FOR POLICING AND COMMUNICATION
(Hon. I. Naivalurua)**

Reply to honourable J. Usamate's question is as follows:

The Fiji Police Force (FPF) maintains a zero-tolerance policy for serious offences and all cases are thoroughly investigated before charges are sanctioned by the Office of the Director of Prosecutions (ODPP).

Below are the data with details concerning the drug and sexual offences carried out by Police Officers from January 2023 to October 2025:

Drugs Statistics [2023-2025]

- In 2024, of the 12 police officers charged for illicit drug- related offences, one was charged for 2 counts of possession involving both methamphetamine and cocaine.
- In 2025, four police officers were charged for multiple counts (unlawful possession, unlawful supply and unlawful importation of illicit drugs).

Table 2: Number of Police Officers as Offenders

Offenders	2023	2024	Jan-Oct 2025
No. of Police Officers	10	12	5
No. of Cases (including counts)	10	13	10

Sexual Offences [2023-2025]

- The number of police officers implicated for sexual offences recorded a decrease from eight in 2023 to six in 2024.
- In the first 10 months of 2025, a total of four police officers were charged.

Table 3: Number of Police Officers as Offenders

Offenders	2023	2024	Jan-Oct 2025
No. of Police Officers	8	6	4
No. of Cases (including counts)	26	22	6

The table below shows the total number of police officers charged for various sexual-related offences, including the number of counts during the specified reporting period.

Officer	2023	2024	Jan-Oct 2025
	Charged For:		
1	Indecent Assault – 6 Counts Sexual Assault – 1 Count	Sexual Assault – 8 Counts Rape – 3 Counts	Indecently Insulting/Annoying Any Person – 2 Counts

		Defilement of Young Person Between 13 and 16 Years of Age – 1 Count Indecent Assault - 1 Count	Indecent Assault – 1 Count
2	Rape – 5 Counts Assault with Intent to Commit Rape – 1 Count Attempt to Commit Rape – 1 Count	Rape – 3 Counts	Rape - 1 Count
3	Sexual Assault – 4 Counts Indecent Assault – 1 Count	Rape – 2 Counts	Rape - 1 Count
4	Indecent Assault - 3 Counts	Sexual Assault - 2 Counts	Rape – 1 Count
5	Attempt to Commit Rape – 1 Count	Indecent Assault – 1 Count	
6	Indecently Insulting or Annoying any Person – 1 Count	Rape – 1 Count	
7	Rape – 1 Count		
8	Attempt to Commit Rape – 1 Count		

The FPF is committed to maintaining the highest levels of integrity. Any officer who is convicted of a serious crime, particularly those that severely breach public trust such as drug and sexual offences, has no place in the FPF and will be dismissed immediately upon conviction.