

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

TUESDAY, 2ND DECEMBER, 2025

[CORRECTED COPY]

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TUESDAY, 2ND DECEMBER 2025

The Parliament met at 2.35 p.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 Environment and Climate Change; the honourable Assistant Minister for Public Enterprises; honourable P.D. Kumar; and honourable V. Lal.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 1st December, 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 back to today's sitting, as we unite in the pursuit of our nation's progress. I also extend a warm welcome 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.

Visitors in the Public Gallery

Honourable Members, please join me in warmly welcoming the executives of the University of the South Pacific (USP) Banaban Students' Association who are here with us. On behalf of the honourable Members, I warmly welcome you all to your Parliament, and I hope that this visit will expand your understanding of how the Parliament works and provide significant awareness of the vital role that Parliament plays, in determining and safeguarding our democracy.

Finally, and I promise that I will not mention Kabara again after this. However, to round off the tour of the children of Kabara District School, I am happy to report that they have all safely arrived on the shores of our island home at lunch today. There is preparation of food, I am told, for a feast and merry making to celebrate our sole gold medal they got from the Tuckers Athletics Games.

2026 CALENDAR OF PARLIAMENT SITTINGS

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That Parliament adopts the Sitting Calendar for the year 2026.

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

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as honourable Members are aware, Standing Order 22(1) provides, and I quote:

“The Business Committee must suggest to Parliament a programme of sitting periods for each session of Parliament or each 12-month sitting period of Parliament, whichever is the shorter.”

Clause 22(2) further states that the approved programme shall be given to Parliament no later than the third sitting day of the session. In that respect, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Business Committee convened and undertook discussions on the proposed Sitting Calendar for 2026. I can confirm that the Business Committee –

- agreed and approved the Sitting Calendar, which was circulated to all honourable Members;
- agreed and approved the Sitting Calendar; and
- further agreed that should there be an imminent need to readjust some of the sittings, that this should be subsequently tabled in Parliament to allow some flexibility.

At this juncture, I need to put on record that there were no objections during the preliminary discussions from the Members of the Business Committee, it was unanimously agreed to. I beg the understanding of all honourable Members to adopt the proposed Sitting Calendar.

For the benefit of all honourable Members, as well as the general public at large, the endorsed Sitting Calendar outlines the following sitting periods:

2026 PARLIAMENT SITTING CALENDAR		
February	Monday 16 th	Official Opening of Parliament
March	Monday 9 th - Friday 13 th	Response to His Excellency's Address
April	Monday 27 th to Friday 1 st May	Parliament Sitting
May	Monday 25 th to Friday 29 th	Parliament Sitting
June	Friday 26 th	Budget Address
July	Monday 6 th to Friday 10 th	Budget Debate
August	Monday 17 th to Friday 21 st	Parliament Sitting
September	Monday 28 th to Friday 2 nd	Parliament Sitting
November	Monday 2 nd to Friday 6 th	Parliament Sitting

Sir, as is now the ongoing practice, the dates for the Budget Address and subsequent Budget debate are confirmed for one week in June-July, as has been the practice in previous years. However, we request flexibility, in case there may be changes in that area as well.

The Sitting Calendar will allow all the six Standing Committees to continue with their Committee work on the Annual Reports that are currently pending with the Committees and Bills that have been moved, and some that may be moved later this week in this august House for consideration. It is for that reason that all honourable Members are requested to support the proposed calendar.

It is vital to emphasise the work of the Standing Committees and significant mechanisms in place related to the Committees' outreach to members of the public. These are important instruments for accountability and examination. We are making ways on how we need to work for the people and the country to try and better our services and be able to allow us as the Government to execute and implement these plans, policies and programmes, while the Standing Committees continue to undertake and discharge their functions mandated in the Standing Orders and the Constitution. I urge honourable Members to support the Sitting Calendar before you.

In conclusion, given the salient points I have put to this august House, I recommend the Sitting Calendar as proposed.

MR. SPEAKER.- The floor is now open for debate on the motion. Are there any?

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank this august House for the support for the Sitting Calendar in front of us.

MR. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

**REVIEW OF AGREEMENT –
ESTABLISHMENT OF A PACIFIC RESILIENCE FACILITY**

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence review the Agreement to establish a Pacific Resilience Facility.

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

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the honourable Acting Attorney-General has moved a motion to refer the Treaty to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

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

[Treaty and Analysis on the Review of the Agreement to establish a Pacific Resilience Facility referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Committee to table a report in Parliament not later 30 days from today.]

**CONSOLIDATED REVIEW REPORT –
CONSUMER COUNCIL OF FIJI'S 2019-2023 ANNUAL REPORTS**

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That Parliament debates the Consolidated Review Report on the Consumer Council of Fiji 2019-2020, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 Annual Reports, which were tabled in November 2025.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Standing Committee on Social Affairs noted that Consumer Council of Fiji is a statutory body established under the Consumer Council Act 1976 (Cap 235). The Council protects the rights and interests of consumers by promoting a fair and just delivery of food and services. Further, the Council is an advocacy organisation, conducting rigorous research and policy analysis on key consumer issues.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee, in its deliberations, highlighted the following recommendations. The Committee recommends that the Council:

- (1) continues to conduct timely job evaluation exercises to avoid repeating the problem of high staff turnover.
- (2) continues to explore MOU with other agencies to speed up the resolution of consumer complaints.
- (3) continues strengthening its various awareness campaigns.
- (4) work closely with the municipality health divisions to address unhygienic practises among restaurant operators.
- (5) must identify the root causes of the problems that re-occur every year, and venture into the establishment of a Fusion Centre, for close collaboration with relevant consumer agencies.
- (6) strengthen its own capacity to handle online scammers and fraudsters.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee noted that the Consumer Council of Fiji's strategic priority areas are aligned with the national development priorities and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee looks forward to the implementation and commitment on the recommendations put forward by the Committee.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I have a list of speakers with me and at the end of the speakers' intervention, I will ask the mover for his right of reply. Please, note that there will be five minutes for each of the speakers who will be called upon to speak.

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, firstly, I would like to acknowledge the work done by the Standing Committee in reviewing the Annual Reports for 2019-2020, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. Most importantly, I wish to thank the Board and management of the Consumer Council of Fiji for their unwavering dedication and tireless efforts in championing the rights and welfare of Fijian consumers. During the pandemic, the Council stepped up by providing clear information about consumer rights, tackling issues such as price gouging, and ensuring essential goods remain viable and available.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight some major reforms and achievements that were undertaken during this reporting period that supports the recommendations of the Committee.

(1) **Digital Transformation**

The Council focused on digital transformation with a new complaints management system, mobile app, upgraded ICT infrastructure and enhanced use of the national consumer helpline. This ensured that consumers would lodge and track complaints remotely, even taking the services to the consumers' doorsteps.

(2) **Modernisation**

With the support of United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the Council revamped its website to provide enhanced user experience and digital engagement.

(3) **Policy Development**

The Council drafted a national policy on maritime travellers' rights, signed an MOU with Land Transport Authority (LTA) to improve coordination on transport related complaints and enforcement.

(4) Consumer Advocacy

Staff worked tirelessly to assist consumers to obtain debt moratorium or debt restructure, as most people did not have an income to meet their repayments during the pandemic period.

(5) Launch of the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan

Forge a new partnership with Vodafone Fiji Limited and Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC) to enhance consumer outreach, digital literacy, business compliance with consumer protection standards as well.

I wish to acknowledge the Council for its tireless effort in addressing the e-ticketing problems raised by consumers with Vodafone through the e-ticketing task force. Sir, I wish to inform this august House that the Consumer Council of Fiji has been able to lobby for the balances in the lost e-ticket cards to be transferred to consumers' new cards.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to-date, the Council is the secretariat of the Anti-Scam Task Force chaired by the Ministry of Commerce and Business Development. An Anti-Scam Awareness Week was held successfully from the 6th to 7th October to educate and safeguard people from scammers and fraudsters.

The Council is also working with UNCDF in drafting a scam legislation which aims to strengthen consumer protection against fraudulent schemes and deceptive practices. This legislation will provide clear legal frameworks for identifying, reporting and penalising scammers thereby enhancing consumer confidence and safety in the marketplace.

We are also progressing with the review of the Consumer Credit Act 1999 to strengthen regulatory oversight, protect consumers from predatory lending practices, and ensure that credit services in Fiji are transparent, fair and responsibly managed.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Consumer Council of Fiji's tireless efforts and important achievements over these challenging years, from navigating the pandemic with innovative digital solutions, to championing vital consumer protections and policy reforms. The Council has proven its vital role in safeguarding the interest of every Fijian.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate on the Consolidated Report of the Consumer Council of Fiji Annual Reports covering the years 2019 to 2023. I wish to thank the Chairman and the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs for the Report. This Report is not merely a reflection of past activities, it is a roadmap for strengthening consumer protection in our nation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, allow me to highlight three recommendations that I believe are critical for advancing the Council's mission and for safeguarding the rights of our people.

(1) The recommendation on staff training and development. The Committee has rightly urged the Council to continue to invest in staff training, particularly through donor-funded initiatives such as the Pacific Inclusion Financial Programme. Consumer protection is a specialised field. It requires staff who are not only technically competent but also resilient in the face of emerging challenges such as digital scams and complex financial disputes. By equipping our officers with the right skills, we ensure that every Fijian, whether in Suva, Lautoka or Labasa, receives timely professional and effective assistance. A well-trained workforce is the backbone of a credible consumer institution.

- (2) A recommendation to strengthen awareness campaigns. The Report makes it clear that consumer complaints often arise from recurring issues, unhygienic practices in restaurants, disputes between landlords and tenants, and confusion over VAT. These problems persist because many consumers remain unaware of their rights and responsibilities. Awareness is prevention, and a strong, consistent campaign across the media, schools and communities will empower citizens to make informed decisions and reduce the burdens of complaints. In an era of digital scams and misinformation, awareness is not optional, but it is essential.
- (3) The third recommendation is Consumer Fusion Centre. The proposal is visionary. It recognises that the Council alone cannot enforce consumer rights. It must work hand-in-hand with agencies such as FCCC, the Ministry of Health and municipal authorities. A Fusion Centre would bring this agency under one roof, creating a one-stop shop for consumers. Imagine the efficiency, – a citizen walks in with a complaint, and instead of being referred from office to another, the matter is resolved collaboratively and swiftly. This is the kind of innovation that restores public confidence in institutions and demonstrates that Government is responsive to the needs of its people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these recommendations - staff training, awareness campaigns and the Fusion Centre are not abstract ideas. They are practical measures that will directly improve the lives of ordinary Fijians. They will build a stronger Council, a more informed public and a more coordinated system of consumer protection. I therefore commend the Committee for its work and urge that these recommendations be implemented with urgency and commitment. Let us ensure that consumer rights are not just words on paper but lived realities for every household in Fiji.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the Consolidated Review Reports for the Consumer Council of Fiji from 2019 to 2023. Of course, I should share my thoughts on the Report and more particularly some of the more contemporary impactful contributions that the Consumer Council has made in terms of consumer advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it has been an absolute pleasure to work with the Consumer Council, whilst I was in the role as Minister, because the level of monitoring that they do to understand the issues in the country is quite extensive. I have always been thoroughly impressed with the work that they carry out. There are only about 28 of them and they do a lot of very good work. I do note that the 2020-2021 Annual Report was not tabled in this august House, and hopefully that can be brought forward. I am sure that is more, just an oversight because as far as I am aware, with the Consumer Council, they are quite diligent in terms of what they do.

Just to share some of the impactful things that have happened, Mr. Speaker, Sir, they were alluded to somewhat by the honourable Minister for Finance and Commerce and Business Development. One is digital scams. When we took office, there was no visibility in terms of scams or scam watching, and unfortunately, this Government saw the emergence of the e-Bay scam. Out of that, the Consumer Council worked with the Ministry, and we now have a very active monitoring of scams in the country. It is a cross inter-agency effort that involves the Reserve Bank of Fiji, FCCC, Police Force, the Consumer Council, the Ministry and other agencies to ensure that scams are managed as soon as they come to light.

One of the things that we are hopeful of doing eventually, is the fact that our laws are not adequate in terms of the management of scams. So, hopefully, in the not too distant future, we will see laws come to the House that will actually give teeth to some of these agencies, so we can shut down scams before they take foothold in our country.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wanted to touch briefly on two other issues. One was touched on by the honourable Minister for Finance, and that was e-ticketing. The Consumer Council was very instrumental in actually raising the concerns when the e-ticketing was being rolled out, and actually it was through their initiatives that we created, the task force that monitored the successful transition, if you like, to the current system. The Consumer Council was very instrumental in monitoring that whole process successfully.

The other item right now, there is a bit of a focus on food safety in this country. I have to say that through the Consumer Council, we have seen some of the food that comes to Fiji is not fit for human consumption, and that advocacy has come through the Consumer Council. There is work being done closely with the Ministry of Health to try and again tighten the laws. I am hopeful that that will come through to ensure that the people of Fiji are consuming high quality food.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of tightening of the laws, one of the things the Consumer Council has been asking for, is the ability to name and shame some of these abuses, and that is something I am hopeful that the Ministry can take forward. Unless we call out these people for bad behaviour, they will continue to abuse the privileges that they have, and it is something that can be looked at closely by this side of the House and the other side of the House in the years to come.

However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in totality, I commend the Standing Committee for their Report and commend the Consumer Council, and its leadership for continuing to advocate for the consumers and the people of Fiji. I am sure that they will continue to be a fundamental role in good governance and monitoring of the consumer's best interest in this country.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also would like to contribute on the motion that is on the floor concerning the Consolidated Review Report on the Consumer Council for the years 2019 to 2021, 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023. I also join the previous speakers in acknowledging the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and thank the Board and Management of the Consumer Council of Fiji.

As we all are aware, the Consumer Council of Fiji is an independent statutory body that was established under the Consumer Council Act of 1976, and the Council, as a watchdog, protects the rights of consumers by promoting a fair and just delivery of goods and services.

We need to understand the six major rights of consumers and honourable Kamikamica has spoken about safety, particularly food safety. That is the first major right of consumers, the right to safety. I recall, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in some of the previous disasters, food, both frozen and dry items, were condemned. However, there were still some suppliers that were, despite this food being condemned by the appropriate authorities, it was still circulated on the shelves. So, this practise is not good, it affects the rights that the consumers have - the rights to safety.

We have the right to be informed, and I acknowledge the findings of the Standing Committee, that there is a lot of awareness campaigns made by the Consumer Council, because we have the right to be informed and additional to that, consumers also have the right to be educated. Therefore, they can only know their rights and, of course, the structures in which they raise their complaints, if there is a lot of awareness and education as well. They have the right to choose, the right to be heard and the right to redress as well.

As I have stated, they are only a watchdog, but they rely on other agencies. I recall during COVID, there was a sudden hike in prices, particularly for price-controlled goods, in certain areas around Viti Levu and, of course, Vanua Levu, and they have to rely on other agencies.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I can just speak on one or two of the recommendations in the remaining time that I have. The Standing Committee recommends on 4.4, that the Council continues to explore MOUs with other agencies - this is very important, because they do not have the teeth, they are only the watchdog. The MOU with the Ministry of Health, Local Government, even with NDMO. We have instances where food stuff, and other assistance packages were sent from, but we just have to condemn them because the language does not allow. We do not know what the content is, the expiry date, et cetera. So, it is very very important that they develop this working relationship with other agencies.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, lastly, again, honourable Kamikamica raised issues that probably, if the Standing Committee can consider reviewing the Act – It is a 1976 Act. Scam is a big issue, the issue on health. Honourable Kamikamica has talked about tightening the laws. Our laws are not sufficient to cover scam issues. It is worth noting, probably, for the future work of our Standing Committees, if we can also consider reviewing the Act because this is a 1976 Act, and a lot has progressed over the years.

That is my short contribution, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Once again, thank you to the Standing Committee, and I support the recommendations therein.

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the motion before this august House. I would like to begin by thanking the Standing Committee - they have worked very hard. and tirelessly throughout the course of this Parliament, and they have been able to put away reports that have gathered dust on the desks. We have had to revive and resurrect some of those reports from the previous government's not handling and not bringing those reports to the House in time. They are now up to date with the reports. The honourable Attorney-General had to dig deep to clean the Attorney-General's Report from way back as 2010, or something like that.

We are very happy that under the chairmanship of honourable Members of Government, we have been able to push these reports and ensure that they are promptly heard in the House, because that is what the public need from us - they need us to deal with the reports and hear about the reports. We are thankful to honourable Vanawalu and the honourable Members of his Standing Committee for producing record-time reports on these institutions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, consumer protection in Fiji, as we know, is governed by a very robust legal framework. There are a number of key legislations that go towards the protection of consumer rights. We start with the Consumer Council of Fiji Act 1976. As the honourable Leader of the Opposition has reminded this august House, it is probably an Act that needs to be relooked at, and needs a revision. I am sure that the honourable Minister responsible is going to be putting that as a matter of priority.

It was initially designed way back in 1976 to focus on promoting fair trade and consumer interests. What happens is that, that piece of legislation – all on its own – did not have enforcement powers. Now, we have the Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission Act 2010 that has come in, and in particular in Part 8, the focus there is the prohibition of misleading advertisements, unsafe food, unfair contracts and prices in non-competitive markets.

We also have the Fair Trading Act 1992, the Hire Purchase Act 1979, and this is usually the one, I am sure, Mr. Speaker, Sir, you will note, most of the case laws that exist around contracts has been designed, or arises out of the way in which contracts are written. It is always the devil is in the detail- it is the small prints that has the most important information. These laws are the ones that

highlight and bring that up so that when you are signing off something as a consumer, you know exactly what you are signing up into.

The Consumer Credit Act 1999 also, Mr. Speaker, and now we have the addition in some respect of the Crimes Act 2009, and the Online Safety Act 2018, in some way, addresses fraud and cyber security issues surrounding consumer protection.

We are happy that the Standing Committee has recognised that under the framework of the laws that regulate and protect consumer rights in Fiji, that it also aligns with the eight global consumer rights that are promoted by the Consumers International, and I just want to run through that in the next 29 seconds.

We have the right to safety, right to information, right to choose, right to redress, right to satisfaction of basic needs, the right to be heard, right to consumer education, and a right to a healthy environment. I am happy, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the Report itself has highlighted the need of this, and I am sure that the honourable Minister concerned is going to consider and take on as a priority the revision of the Consumer Council Act 1976.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I thank the Chairman and the honourable Members of the Standing Committee for the Report, and all those honourable Members, including the honourable Minister for Finance, who has spoken before me.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, all the speakers have underscored the point about the role of the Consumer Council of Fiji as an advocacy organisation, an organisation that does market surveillance, looks at business practices, and is a watchdog and a voice of consumers. More importantly, the Consumer Council of Fiji is a very important policy engagement organisation - an advisory organisation, and some of the things that they bring out, as a result of what is happening, and how the consumers are responding, based on the experiences they have and the complaints they make to the Consumer Council of Fiji, allows us to put in policies. For example, when we are formulating a budget, we look at taxes and how the cost of living is translating into what the consumers are complaining and experiencing.

The role of the organisation is extremely important, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the bigger scheme of things. As part of the National Development Plan (NDP), the role of the Consumer Council of Fiji – the watchdog and surveillance role it plays, are extremely important in informing the Government and policy making.

One very important point that consumers always complain about is the information about prices and the cost of living. I want to make this point, that it is upon us, as honourable Members, because I know some of my colleagues on the other side always keep talking about the rising cost of living without actually looking at what the actual figures are. If I show you this graph from the Reserve Bank of Fiji, it shows the inflation trend from November 2024 to November 2025, and you can see a clear trend showing that the inflation rate has been on a month-to-month decline over the last 12 months.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the annual average inflation rate is less than 1.5 percent. That shows that our policies, whether it is our tax policy or the reduction in VAT in the last Budget or the reduction in duty in the last two or three Budgets, and the surveillance and strict enforcement of those reductions in terms of translating those policies into prices, are very important.

Let me just explain how this inflation rate is calculated. The Consumer Price Index (CPI), Mr. Speaker, Sir, is made up of 12 major expenditure groups and includes about 900 individual items surveyed every month. The Bureau of Statistics then comes out with a CPI index, which is the cost of living index. It shows that compared to what has been the trend in many other countries, including Australia and New Zealand where we import most of our goods, within the CPI basket of 12 expenditure group items, you will always find that some prices will go up. For example, meat prices, cereal prices, et cetera. If wheat prices go up in Australia or elsewhere where we import, then bread prices will go up here. It is not directly because of Government policy - it is because of what happens in the other markets.

However, we are very pleased to see, as a government, that our CPI...

(Hon. J. Usamate interjects)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I am explaining this honourable Usamate very, very clearly and carefully, and you are a statistician. You understand how CPI is calculated. So, please, do not go and lie out there to the people that the inflation rate is increasing under this Government. It has not been increasing, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it has been on the decline. This is the graph that all of you should read, and this is from the RBF about CPI.

(Honourable Opposition Members interject)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- With those few words, Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me remind the honourable Members, let us be honest with our consumers because they need to be very clear about what is the state of affairs and what the Government policy is doing. I am not saying that prices of some items have not gone up - some go up and some go down, but there are other factors that determine what is happening.

(Hon. J. Usamate interjects)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- ...This is the graph that you can take this weekend...

(Hon. A.A. Maharaj interjects)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

One moment, please. Now, I will issue a yellow card - each yellow card to honourable Usamate and to honourable Maharaj. You are excused from Parliament for one and a half hours. You may take your leave now.

(Honourable Usamate and Honourable Maharaj suspended for 90 minutes and leave the Chamber)

MR. SPEAKER.- Please, proceed, honourable Member.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. All I was saying is that the Consumer Council of Fiji also has a responsibility to actually put out the correct information in their advocacy, in their information and in their public campaign about what is happening on the ground, what are the Government policies and why these policies can work in different ways. For example, a consumer complains about meat prices imported from New Zealand when everyone knows that the rate of inflation in New Zealand is very high, even if the duty here is zero, even if the item is VAT exempted with zero VAT, still the prices are going to go up because where we are importing from, the prices are going up there. That is what I was trying to explain.

With those few words, I want to thank the Standing Committee, and I endorse the Report.

MR. SPEAKER.- I will now call on the honourable Vanawalu the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to speak in reply.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Standing Committee on Social Affairs noted the positive contributions as well as the negative that have been heard from honourable Members in this House this afternoon during the debate on the Consolidated Review Report on the 2019-2023 Consumer Council of Fiji Annual Reports.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to thank the Board members, Executive Management and staff of Consumer Council of Fiji for their commitment, dedication, and unwavering support which have been instrumental to the successful operation of the Council. A humble request to the Consumer Council of Fiji for the successful implementation of the recommendations put forward by the Standing Committee. On that note, I support the motion before this august House, and I thank you for the opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote to note the content of the Report.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED REVIEW REPORT - FIJI NATIONAL PROVIDENT FUND 2023 AND 2024 ANNUAL REPORTS

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That Parliament debates the Consolidated Review Report on the Fiji National Provident Fund 2023 and 2024 Annual Reports, which were tabled on 5th November, 2025.

HON.V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU - The Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) is a defined contribution fund that provides superannuation services to its members. The operation of the Fund is guided by the FNPF Act 2011. The FNPF collects compulsory contributions from employees and employers towards the retirement savings of all workers in Fiji. The Fund also provides pre-retirement benefits such as housing, medical, unemployment, funeral and educational assistance to its members.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the FNPF continues to play a pivotal role in safeguarding the retirement savings of all Fijians, with total asset reaching \$10.6 billion as of June 2024. Of this, \$8.1 billion belongs directly to the members. The Fund now serves over 423,000 members, with 264,000 active

contributors, 14,138 voluntary active contributing, and maintains a relationship with 8,488 active members.

Despite the challenges posed by global economic conditions, particularly the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fund has maintained a strong investment portfolio. However, the Committee noted that interest earned from Government bonds has remained stagnant since 2020 due to high liquidity of the market. To address this, the Committee recommends that the Government and the Reserve Bank of Fiji facilitate each approval process for offshore investments, enabling greater diversification and improved returns.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee also acknowledges the ongoing review of the FNPF Act, aimed at aligning the Fund's operations with modern business practices and evolving investment strategies, hence the Committee recommends that this review continue with robust public consultations and stakeholder engagement to ensure the legislation reflects the needs of today's workforce.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, transparency remains a cornerstone of public trust. The Committee noted with concern that major investment decisions are not being adequately communicated to the public. We recommend that FNPF strengthen its communication mechanisms, ensuring members are informed of significant investment decisions, including associated risks and benefits.

Operationally, while the fund has expanded its service, the Committee observed a need to strengthen cost control measures, particularly around consultancy fees and operational expenses, while the Committee recommends that FNPF enhance its financial efficiency while maintaining service quality delivery to its members.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Social Affairs Committee looks forward to the implementation and commitment of the recommendations put forward by the Committee.

MR. SPEAKER. - Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. I have a list of speakers with me. Each will be given five minutes to deliver his or her address.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate on the consultative Review Report of the Fiji National Provident Fund Annual Reports for 2023-2024.

First, let me commend FNPF management team for providing a thorough overview of the Fund's operations. The figure \$10.6 billion in total assets, the 8 percent interest credited, the return to a positive net contribution are indeed impressive. They reflect resilience and commitment, and we must acknowledge that FNPF continues to be the financial bedrock of this nation.

However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this institution cannot be judged solely by its balance sheet. We are talking about the people's money, every dollar earned, invested and spent belongs to the working men and women of Fiji. The entire purpose of this Fund is not merely to generate a number on a page but to provide a secure and dignified retirement for our citizens. This brings me to a critical paradox that lies at the heart of FNPF's investment strategy. Sir, FNPF is a majority shareholder or a significant investor in many of the largest, most crucial companies and properties in Fiji. Our telecommunications providers like Vodafone, our hospitality sector including InterContinental Resort, Fiji Marriott Resort and The Westin Resort, and even goods providers like Future Farms Pte Limited trading as Rooster Poultry.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, FNPF member is the owner, the shareholder and the ultimate beneficiary of these profitable entities. Yet that very same FNPF member is also the consumer who has to pay the

prices set by these businesses, prices for chicken, hotel rooms, mobile data, call rates, et cetera. We must ask, is the pursuit of maximum return by these FNPF-owned entities undermining the daily financial stability of the very people who own them? Are the profits being generated by setting prices so high that they erode the purchasing power of the members' present-day salaries?

This Parliament has a moral obligation to ensure that FNPF's mandate is not just about financial return, but about social return. The board must balance its fiduciary duty to maximise member funds, with the need to ensure that FNPF subsidiaries operate responsibly, contributing to affordability and the overall welfare of the nation. It should be a win-win, not a situation where the member's right pocket is being emptied to fill the Fund's left pocket.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I turn now to the specific critical findings outlined in the Committee's Report which demand immediate government intervention and FNPF accountability.

Firstly, the finding on transparency is worrying. Major investment decisions, the fate of billions in members' savings, the acquisition of properties like Lyndhurst Limited or the significant cost escalation and the delays in The Westin Fiji Resort redevelopment must be communicated clearly and proactively, with full disclosures of the associated risks and returns.

Secondly, on the issue of performance, the FNPF correctly points out that returns from government bonds have been stagnant due to market liquidity. The clear answer is offshore diversification. We cannot afford to have 90 percent of the \$10.6 billion Fund, constrained by the limited local economy. I strongly urge the Government and the Reserve Bank of Fiji to heed the Committee's recommendations and immediately streamline the approval process for offshore investment. This is not just a growth opportunity; it is a fundamental risk mitigation strategy.

Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we must address operational efficiency. The significant jump in the consultancy fees noted by the Committee raises serious questions. While rebranding and project work are necessary, every expenditure must be scrutinised. We must ensure that the Fund strengthens its internal capacity, instead of perpetually relying on external consultants whose high fees directly cut into members' income.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Sir the issue of Healthcare Fiji Concession Agreement with Aspen Medical is paramount. My colleagues and I have raised concerns about this during the submission. While we support the vision of an advanced healthcare infrastructure like the 305-bed hospital, the current ambiguity regarding the provision of essential services, particularly medicine, is unacceptable. The Committee's recommendation is correct – the FNPF board and the Government must immediately finalise this agreement.

HON. E.Y.IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the Committee for their Report on the 2023 and 2024 Annual Reports. The Fund remains steadfast in their objectives to safeguard the members' savings and also deliver the best financial return for their retirement. Whilst doing this, the Fund also recognises the value to members must be holistic and include quality of service, transparency and the assurance they provide to members everyday.

The Fund continues to look for ways to improve their processes and engagement with members to support and connect with them.

Key highlights for 2023-2024, some of which were already highlighted by honourable Pillay.

- Total assets for 2023 - \$9.5 billion, 2024 - \$10.6 billion and the latest report of 2025 that was tabled last week, the assets increased to over \$12 billion - a \$2 billion increase in a year.

- Net income - \$775.8 million in 2023 to \$882 million in 2024.
- Interest credited to members - 7 percent in 2023, 8 percent in 2024 and we are all aware that 8.75 percent was in 2025.
- Membership increased from 405,865 in 2023 to 423,144 in 2024, and active employers as well increased from 8,003 in 2023 to 8,488 in 2024, which also shows the growth in the economy.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will concentrate more on the 2023-2024 key highlights, some of which supports or provides solutions to the recommendations provided by the Committee.

The FNPF launched a new retirement product, the Members' drawdown product in January 2023. This product offers more flexibility to members by providing them with a monthly income and allowance for one withdrawal per financial year.

They reviewed the education withdrawal policy to allow members to apply for professional development courses to improve their job prospects and to purchase laptops for those enrolled in studies.

They have enhanced digital solutions and improved mobile app by adding Visa, MasterCard and M-PAiSA payment options for members and employers. They have increased advocacy efforts with 356 nationwide campaigns, including workplace seminars, community outreach and pop-up services in different areas in Fiji. So, they are listening to the people of Fiji and especially the members.

Some of the highlights in 2024, net return on investments increased to 8.5 percent from 8.3 percent in 2023. Starting September 2024, membership was extended to infants from birth to encourage early savings accumulation, aligning with the Fund's goal to help members prepare for significant life events and retirement.

A gift card initiative was also launched in July 2024, to allow members to give an amount to their loved ones. Also, they have introduced a fairer and practical penalty system to encourage voluntary compliance and enhance contributions collections from employers. The Fund also achieved a customer satisfaction index score of 4.1 percent out of five, indicating members' trust and confidence in the Fund. This was an improvement from 3.97 in 2022. The survey was conducted independently with more than 10,000 survey respondents across different parts of Fiji.

There are some challenges. The key one is ongoing global uncertainties. The second is the investment in the bond market. However, the Fund is working on the review of the FNPF Act, which I highlighted this week. Also, they are working on the Fund's investment diversification strategy to enhance return as well as strengthen the Fund.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there have been calls for transparency and inclusion of members in investment decisions. While the Fund supports the need for transparency and accountability on investment decisions, the Fund respectfully raises that this would compromise the fundamental governance principles that protect members' interests and ensure optimal investment outcomes are more or less guaranteed for members. The Fund remains committed to implement and enhance post-decision communication mechanisms for members.

The Fund has done a lot for its members and their plans for better transparency and enhancement in the service they provide the members and intended members. I commend the board, FNPF management and staff for the hard work and perseverance during the financial years. With all that being said, I move that this august House approves the Consolidated Review Report of the 2023

and 2024 FNPF Annual Reports.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the outset, let me just commend the Committee for this Report on the 2023-2024 FNPF Annual Reports. I think the Committee has come up with some really valuable recommendations but there are some things that need to be vented, and most of the stuff has already been picked up by the honourable Minister for Finance.

One of the things that we must remember, Sir, this is a phenomenal institution. It began many, many years ago and has progressed quite well but there is also probably time for some reform to be looked at for the institution as a whole, even though it is a superb class of investment in terms of our people who are part and parcel of it. The findings of the Committee are very important things that we must look at. One of the things we must remember, we are looking at an asset portfolio – as mentioned for this particular year (2024), we are looking \$10.6 billion. What I gather from the honourable Minister for Finance's speech just now, I think we are reaching almost \$12 billion at FNPF. These are from not even half a million-odd members. If you look at it, it is quite phenomenal and the crediting rate is actually at 8 percent, which is a 25-year high.

This is an institution that has performed well beyond expectations. This kind of institution creates an impact, and in the words of the Chairperson in his Report, it actually creates an impact on the local financial system. In order for the FNPF to look at securing good investments, they now have to start looking offshore, and so the recommendation that it be made a little easier for them to do it, they have to look at how it can be done is very important. I think the Committee has recommended that we look at that.

One of the important things that stands out is the recommendation with respect to the investments that FNPF actually made. I think it was just mentioned by honourable Viam Pillay about two investments that were made and one was Lyndhurst Limited and the other one was the Westin redevelopment project.

Like anything, all investments that FNPF have made are actually quite good. They give great returns, but there is one which is worrying. I had raised this earlier with respect to the Westin investment, it is in the tourism industry, it gives phenomenal returns. But when you start investing in that particular industry, the ethics involved in it are quite important. There are ethical considerations when you actually owner and owner of part of the construction company at the same time. I had raised this. This raises huge concerns. Effectively, Sir, what will happen is, if tomorrow there is an issue – and I know there already is – then the FNPF will be suing its own company. Where do you draw the line? How does that work?

There needs to be some kind of inquiry into why we did we get into that space, how is it that that came about, or how is it that it is protected? These are the questions that need to be asked and aired, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because it is very important. You cannot put yourself in that position, especially with the likes of such a huge project like the Westin itself, which is in huge demand. It is a well-known tourism brand and as the honourable Minister for Tourism will tell you, we actually need those rooms like yesterday in order to increase the tourism portfolio. So, while a stop on the project, there are questions to be asked that why has that happened? Why did we get ourselves into that position in the first place? It should never have happened, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I know the answer that was given by the honourable Minister for Finance earlier was, "Oh, it is like an uncle and a nephew thing." It does not work like that.

It is very important that we find out how and why that transpired. That is the only blip on the radar from our perspective. I think, otherwise, the credibility and transparency involved in making these investments are quite good. This may be something that just fell off the rails for a little bit, but

all in all, I think when the Fund is aligned with its long-term objectives and getting measurable returns, it is important that we strengthen the oversight with respect to our FNPF investments. All in all, Sir, I think it is also commendable that the Government has allowed some of us to invest back in the FNPF because of the massive returns it gives. It is a great place to keep your money as it is safe, and it also gives a phenomenal return. I commend the Report, Sir.

HON. S. TUBUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate on the Consolidated Review Report on the 2023 and 2024 Annual Reports of the Fiji National Provident Fund, as tabled by the Standing Committee on Social Affairs. I wish to commend the Committee for its scrutiny of the Fund's operations over the two reporting years.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the findings are clear - FNPF continues to grow, continues to stabilise our economy, and continues to stand as the most important financial institution for the working people of Fiji. Today's debate is not merely about the financial statements. It is about the trust in the institution that safeguards the retirement savings of over 423,000 Fijians. It is a trust in the governance of the Fund that now holds \$10.6 billion in assets, and trust in a system that must continue to evolve with a changing world.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Report highlights that the FNPF investment portfolio grew from \$9.4 billion in 2023 to \$10.6 billion in 2024. This is a significant achievement, given the global financial pressures, inflationary challenges, and the aftershocks of the pandemic.

I just wish to highlight this afternoon the important role that the FNPF can play in addressing national poverty. In his speech on 14th July, 2025, the honourable Prime Minister highlighted what the country must do to address poverty. One of the areas he highlighted is that the economic ground is undulating, opportunities are unequal, and systems are cumbersome. We need new legislations that needs to be validated or repealed that starts from the parent law. We need more involvement of the *iTaukei*.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight this afternoon the issue of how the FNPF can invigorate business for the indigenous people of this country. This is not racism, but a practical fact. Sir, 80 percent of the land is owned by *iTaukei* and 75 percent of indigenous people are under poverty. We have heard from our honourable Prime Minister when he spoke of the significant funds that are going to the *iTaukei* population, but we have not seen the outcome - \$100 million annually from iTLTB, majority of the remittances are going to the *iTaukei* of almost \$1 billion, and of course, the wages that are going to the general population.

I need to ask, Mr. Speaker, Sir, what is the role of FNPF? We need to get the *iTaukei* to be involved in commercial business, there should be a new policy developed by the FNPF Board, and medium enterprises with a threshold of \$10 million. There was someone that went to FNPF to ask for some business opportunities, and they were told that the threshold was \$30 million. So, we need to inform them that they should be looking at the practical realities on the ground. How can we invigorate medium businesses with a threshold of \$5 million? Of course, you know FNPF has to undertake its scrutiny to all the proposals. It has to be bankable projects, and they have to scrutinise all the proposals that come to them ensuring that these are bankable projects, and they have to put in their expertise in analysing these projects.

I also welcome the initiative by the Board to change the Act. I think it is quite important that they also need to amend the Act, so that it is in line with the best practices that are being adopted in other countries, and they need to take that into account.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support this Report, and I commend the Standing Committee for the Report that they have produced.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute on the motion that is before us. What emerges from the Report, and the mounting public commentary is not a picture of best but of concern in some areas. There are about 11 recommendations, and I will briefly touch on two important recommendations. Mr Speaker, Sir, let us be frank - the fund has failed in some areas in its core duty to its contributors, the Fiji workers and their families.

The Review confirms what many have suspected - major investment decisions were made without adequate transparency or consultation with members. Moreover, what we are seeing today is not best of our national retirement savings, but a pattern of risky investment in commercial property, and hotel assets that threatens the very security of contributors. Let us consider the glaring example, the Westin Project. My colleagues have spoken on that.

The Consolidated Review Report has stated that major investment decisions undertaken by FNPF are not communicated normally to the public, limiting stakeholders' awareness. For example, as stated earlier on, the Westin Resort in Denarau, once one of the crown jewels of the tourism property portfolio, the Standing Committee went there, and we were initially stopped and told we could not enter. We had to wait for half an hour.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. P.K. BALA. - Can you people listen? It is not only for us to listen, but you also have to listen as well!

MR. SPEAKER. - Honourable Bala, you address the Chair.

HON. P.K. BALA. – Do not laugh! There is nothing funny about it.

MR. SPEAKER. - Honourable Bala, address the Chair.

HON. P.K. BALA. – A good example is the Westin Resort in Denarau, once one of the crown jewels of the tourism property portfolio - redevelopment renovation works was instantly stopped because of the contractual dispute, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Given this, there is a serious risk of the fund.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to request the honourable Minister, if he could reveal the findings and recommendation from the special independent audit that was completed last month. I thought that the honourable Minister will reveal something in his speech. Unfortunately, he has not, but I hope that in future sittings, he will because that will reveal all that has happened there. This independent report should also be made public.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a lot has been said about the Public-Private Partnership (PPP). Some honourable Members used to criticise this initiative, in particular, honourable Professor Prasad, led by the previous government, which now has been reaping the benefits.

Aspen Medical Fiji has conducted around 310 heart surgeries and around 483 cardiac procedures which is angiogram, free of charge. In October 2025, a first for any hospital across the Pacific, Ba Hospital managed by Aspen Medical, officially earned the gold seal of approval from Joint Commission International (JCI), a globally recognised symbol of quality that reflects an organisation's commitment to meeting international standards for patient safety and quality of care. So, that partnership was correct.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, JCI is awarded to healthcare organisations that demonstrate continuous compliance with evidence-based standards spanning clinical care, patient safety, leadership and facility management.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in previous sittings, some honourable Members also criticised that due diligence was not followed when the PPP commenced, but the FNPF Management has confirmed and revealed to the Standing Committee that due diligence was followed. That was done through the engagement of a specialised consultant in that area, which was, as I mentioned earlier, by the Management.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Standing Committee's Recommendation No. 4.8 states that FNPF must immediately finalise the concessional agreement with Healthcare Fiji Limited to ensure that the public is not affected. If the honourable Minister can also inform how much has been spent for grass cutting at the FNPF land in Nasese - I am told that around \$400,000 has been spent, and I stand to be corrected, but I hope the honourable Minister will come up with the figures.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I re-emphasise Recommendation No. 4.5 on ensuring accountability and transparency in unnecessary operational expenses. There has been an increase in the consultancy fee from \$300,000 to \$1.5 million. That is huge!

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am actually quite amused by the last honourable Member's contribution, in particular with respect to Aspen Medical, and honourable Bala knows that in the second Budget, I spent close to 15 minutes to actually explain how Aspen Medical - both Lautoka and Ba Hospitals, were handed over to that company. Sir, FNPF was forced into that agreement by the FijiFirst Government.

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

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- when we came in, Mr. Speaker, Sir, he was talking about free treatment. Not a single patient who enters Lautoka Hospital and Ba Hospital gets a free treatment by Aspen or FNPF. Every single cent is paid by the Government, and it is this Government that actually got to the point to look at how that agreement was done. We actually handed the Hospitals to a company without them actually meeting any of the concessional conditions. Therefore, we were landed with a situation where we, first of all, did three things.

One, we made sure that HFC, in partnership with FNPF and Aspen Medical, improve their services. So, if you go to Ba Hospital or Lautoka Hospital and look at the equipment that they have now, if you look at the accreditation that they have got, they have all those and - the improvements they have made, under this Government and under the work that a committee, supported by independent consultants, did. We actually got an audit done. We do not want to reveal what was there because we are still negotiating the final agreement, and we are on the verge of getting that done. So, honourable Bala has actually forgotten how that was done.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other PPP that he talked about, again, we landed with that issue. It was a COVID-19 measure, and we understood that. However, it continued to flourish, and Government kept on paying every single cent, and we finally got a handle on it. We put in a cap there, we have got a means test, so we are able to control that. That is just on Aspen.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me just get back to some of the investments. Yes, we understand that sometimes investments go wrong, and FNPF is a very large entity. It is this Government, Sir, that actually ensured that FNPF has an independent investment committee made up of experts, and that committee is going to support the decision by the FNPF investment committee and the Board to

actually look at that.

Honourable Bala knows that the Westin Hotel was closed during COVID-19, that the FNPF and this Government inherited. There were issues with respect to how the project was managed, but as he said quite rightly, there is an independent investigation report as to where the lapses were, and we are told very clearly that there were lapses, but the investment is up to date. Once it is completed, it will provide the right return to FNPF.

I know that the honourable Minister for Finance and other honourable Members have talked about this. In fact, FNPF in the last two years, post COVID-19, it is a member driven fund - it is a fund where members contribute. It does not just come from a tree or somewhere, it is something that they contribute, investments are made, the interest is paid, but it is a large financial institution. It has concentration risk of investment. There are governance issues, transparency and accountability. There is pressure on liquidity, low balances for a large percentage of our people, regulations, intergenerational equity, these are issues that any large super fund will always have to take into account.

The honourable Members on the other side also forgot how the FNPF 2011 reform was done, unilaterally. It is this Government that actually gave some reprieve to the pensioners by making sure that those whose pensions was reduced, Government took on the responsibility, instead of putting the responsibility to FNPF. The laws that were made, as part of the 2013 Constitution, cannot be changed, then the decision cannot be reversed.

Government took the responsibility, so about \$4 million per year to compensate those pensioners, who had abruptly lost their share of pension. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not have a lot of time.

MR. SPEAKER.- You do not have any more time, honourable Member.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- But I am already over time, but there are a lot of issues that I could have responded to, which was not relayed very carefully by the Report. I think the Standing Committee and some members of the Committee kind of hijacked what was supposed to be clearly reflected in the Report, and that is not fair, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- The Standing Committee on Social Affairs noted the constructive, as well as destructive contributions made by the honourable Members in this august House during this debate on the Consolidated Review Reports, 2023 and 2024, Fiji National Provident Funds Annual Report.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to thank the Board Members, the Executive Management and Staff of Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) for their commitments, dedication, unwaiving support, which have been instrumental to the successful operation of the Fund.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I humbly request FNPF for the successful implementation of the recommendation put forward by the Standing Committee. On that note, I support the motion before the House.

Question put.

Motion agreed.

MR. SPEAKER.- I intend to take a break a bit early today. We still have few more items in the Order Paper to deal with, but given the hour, I will now entertain a suspension motion for the

purposes of compliance to the Standing Order in respect to sitting times.

I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move a suspension motion.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

That under Standing Order 6, that so much of Standing Order 23(1) is suspended so as to allow the House to sit beyond 4.30 p.m. today to complete the remaining items listed in today's Order Paper.

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

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have four important reports:

- (1) Fiji Airways;
- (2) Water Authority of Fiji;
- (3) The Auditor-General; and
- (4) General Election Report for 2022.

MR. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament to speak in reply, if any.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not have any further comments.

Question put.

Motion agreed.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will now suspend proceedings for a break. The Parliament will resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.10 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 4.45 p.m.

REVIEW REPORT ON THE FIJI AIRWAYS 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Review Report on the Fiji Airways 2023 Annual Report which was tabled on 5th November 2025.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, Fiji Airways was founded in 1947, and in 1971, Qantas took over its operations and rebranding the airline company to Air Pacific. Hence, it landed its first international flight to Brisbane, Australia, in 1973. The airline company further rebranded to its original name, Fiji Airways, in 2013. The rebranding was part of the broader strategy to enhance its market presence and customer service.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in 2023, Fiji Airways obtained a total asset of FJ\$3.4 billion against FJ\$3.2 billion expenditure, hence, the net profit was FJ\$265 million. On that amount, it paid 82.6 percent dividend to its local stakeholders.

The Committee noted that Fiji Airways made a huge financial turnaround from \$175 billion loss in 2022, to an operational profit of \$113.2 million in 2023. Hence, Fiji Airways must repay its loans according to the agreement with Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) and the Fiji Development Bank (FDB).

The Committee noted that Fiji Airways expanded its international destination to Canberra, Noumea, and recently to Dallas, thus the Committee recommends that Fiji Airways must continue to identify and expand on securing new economical destinations.

The Committee was pleased to note that Fiji Airways has invested extensively towards the construction of its Aviation Academy in Namaka, Nadi. Therefore, the Committee recommends that Fiji Airways must continue to invest in their aviation academy for the benefit of its locals.

Madam Deputy Speaker, surprisingly, the Committee noted that Fiji Airways' chartered flight to Israel in September 2023, resulted in a matter referred to the courts for non-payment of fares. Consequently, the Committee strongly recommends that Fiji Airways should immediately find avenues to recover costs incurred for the special charter flight to Israel.

The Committee noted the achievements of Fiji Airways in 2023, and supported the important role played by Fiji Airways in providing efficient and effective service to its customers. Given that Fiji Airways is our national airline, it must deliver and stand by its obligation to propel our economy forward.

In summary, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Standing Committee looks forward to the implementation and commitments of the recommendations it has put forward.

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to thank the Standing Committee for the Report on Fiji Airways' 2023 Annual Report. Madam Deputy Speaker, Fiji Airways is transitioning from recovery to resurgence. The year's report is particularly special as it is Fiji Airways' first publication in 13 years. There were no reports in the last 13 years, so it is special for us today.

Financial Year 2023 marked a shift from post-COVID recovery to a period of strong operational and financial resurgence. As mentioned by the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, it restored its network to full capacity after the border reopening, with services resumed to Narita, Hong Kong, Adelaide, Christchurch and Wellington. It launched new routes, including Canberra and Noumea. It focused operationally on stabilising its routes, reinstating full schedules, rebuilding workforce capability, and optimising fleet utilisation.

For 2024, Fiji Airways is moving towards sustainable and disciplined growth, which provides solutions to most of the Committee's recommendations. Key developments include significant network growth, increased frequencies across Australia, New Zealand, North America Pacific, and improving connectivity for tourism, trade and national economic activity.

Fiji Airways continued to invest in long-term capability, including customer experience enhancement, digital systems and major expansions to the aviation academy. These investments strengthened the airline's operational foundation and positioned Fiji Airways for sustainable growth.

Some key achievements:

- increase in equity to \$266 million;
- reduce total debt by \$100 million to \$682 million;
- earn \$99 million in cargo revenue; and
- carried 2.2 million passengers up from 1.4 million in 2022 and 1.7 million in 2019.

They grew their capacity as well by 47 percent to 2.8 million. As I mentioned before, they operated international, regional and domestic flights in 2023, numbering 26,586, representing a 40 percent growth from 2022.

They added two state-of-the-art Airbus A350-900 to its fleet, taking total aircraft to 21. Added Canberra and Noumea to their network. Commenced Phase 2 construction of the Fiji Airways Aviation Academy which cost \$130 million, with \$49 million spent in 2023. They achieved 15th place in the Skytrax World Top 100, Best Airline in Australia Pacific, Best Airline Staff, Best Cabin Services, and the Apex Five-Star Major Airline Award. They acquired additional shares in Richmond Limited as well as in Vatu Talei Investments.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Fiji Airways affirms that all repayment obligations to FNPF and FDB are fully met in compliance with the terms and conditions of the agreement. It continues to secure new economical destinations, continues to invest to maintain Fiji Airways Aviation Academy, maintains a strategic approach to tourism-linked investments such as Vatu Talei with BSP Life.

Fiji Airways remains committed to its staff employment, empowerment and capacity in building a future-ready workforce that meets and exceeds international standards. Its strategy focussed to capitalise on its people and build service quality. Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend the Board, management, and staff of Fiji Airways for their efforts and perseverance during the last financial year. Therefore, I move that the House approves the Review Report of the 2023 Fiji Airways Annual Report.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak on the Review Report on the 2023 Fiji Airways Annual Report, and more broadly on the state of our national aviation sector, an industry that is the very lifeblood of our economy and our connectivity to the world.

Firstly, let me give credit where it is due. The Report before us confirms that Fiji Airways achieved a remarkable record-breaking operational profit of \$113.2 million and revenue of \$1.8

billion in 2023. These are not merely numbers, they are a testament to resilience, strategy and sheer hard work.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we must also apply the necessary lens of history and accountability. We all remember the dark days of 2020. I remember the strong opposition in this House when the former government moved decisively to extend Government guarantees and secure the future of our national airline. Let us be clear, if some in this House had their way, if their advice had been followed, Fiji Airways would not be around today. There would be no \$1.8 billion revenue, no dividends, no national airline acting as the engine of our tourism industry. That is a fact, and that should humble every Member when we discuss the future of vital assets.

The achievement we celebrate today is built on a foundation of courageous political decision that saved 2,000 Fijian jobs and preserved our economic lifeline. We must commend the airline's strategy, which, as the Report confirms, was based on being future-fit and investing in self-sufficiency. This includes the massive \$130 million investment in the Fiji Airways Aviation Academy in Nadi, which now provides full flight simulator training for all fleet types. This Academy is a powerful symbol of the long-term commitment to developing local Fijian talent. The push was and must continue to be, to train and employ more Fijian pilots and engineers, reducing our reliance on overseas expertise and keeping those skills and dollars right here at home.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I now turn to a matter of immediate and grave concern, one that rips at the heart of our commitment to developing local aviators. Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji issued a press release confirming the non-renewal of a domestic airline's Aircraft Maintenance Organization (AMO) certificate, effectively forcing the wrap-up of what we know as the nation's largest flying school - Pacific Flying School.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to become a pilot in Fiji is not cheap. It is not something a family decides on a whim. These families have invested tens of thousands of dollars, their life savings, their land, their sacrifice to fund the dreams of their children. Dreams of becoming a Fiji Airways pilot, trained and flying for their own country and now where do they go? Where are the students who were promised a future in aviation going to complete their expensive time-critical training?

Madam Deputy Speaker, the CAAF statement is clear. No operational or commercial consideration can override the requirements to meet safety standards. I agree - safety is paramount, but the statement goes on to say the Minister respects the regulators' legal independence and will not intervene in operational safety decisions. This is not about intervening in a safety decision, this is about the human cost of a regulatory decision. This is about accountability and transparency. The Minister may not intervene in the decision, but he is certainly accountable to this House for the disruption cost to Fijian families and the future pipeline of our national airline's talent pool.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Point of Order!

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Carry on, honourable Minister.

HON. RO. F.Q. TUISAWAU.- ... report on the airline - Fiji Airways, not on the regulatory function of CAAF.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Thank you, I accept your Point of Order. Honourable Pillay, could you stick to the topic, please?

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I have already concluded my statement and thank you very much for the opportunity.

(Laughter)

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, very clearly, our children can be flying almost immediately if the operator can sign a Memorandum of Understanding with two entities in Fiji today. Once he signs that MOU with them, our children will be flying almost immediately. The ball is in the court of the operator, stop crying foul, go out and get the MOU signed and our children will be flying almost immediately.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- *Vinaka.*

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate on the Annual Report of Fiji Airways and I can say that the Report is very illuminating, telling us something that we are really proud of, that is, our national airline Fiji Airways. Just for the record, no one from the other side of the House at that time wanted to sell Fiji Airways or Air Pacific at that time.

For me personally, I commented on why you did not continue the relationship with Qantas at that time. We did not say get rid of Fiji Airways, I just said that Qantas had done so much and should have continued to work with Fiji Airways. However, that is in the bye and bye, we are here today. Let us understand that we are all proud of our national airline; everyone, both sides of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the comments about the loans with FNPF and FDB, as highlighted by the Minister of Finance, Fiji Airways is fully compliant in servicing these loans. I might just add here, these loans to the local lenders, I just want to check on what security they are holding. It is about \$600 million. Fiji Airways' assets would exceed a billion dollars. I just hope they are not tying up the whole assets of Fiji Airways in this loan, because if they do, then it limits Fiji Airways' ability to raise favourable finance from elsewhere. I would like that to be put on record, because I think our local lenders tend to overdo their security part of the equation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, just some comments on how they help marketing. As noted in the Report, Fiji Airways spends about \$70 million a year on destinations, promoting it. If Fiji Airways is \$70 million — Tourism Fiji is about \$35 million, and the other operators spend 4 percent of their gross receipts, Fiji will be spending more than \$100 million a year on marketing. That is what we need to have. to compete in this day against much bigger destinations, Fiji needs to spend that kind of dollars to continue with what we see in tourism today and Fiji Airways is very much playing its role in that sense.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the comment about investment in the academy for flight training, is very well-founded. It is something worthy to continue to pursue. Today, Nadi is a centre of aviation in the Pacific. Someone went there recently, and so the whole complex was speaking in French, because these were pilots from French Polynesia who fly ATR, who came to Nadi to train for ATR in the simulators in Nadi. We are becoming the centre of gravity in terms of aviation and Fiji Airways is very much part of that, making us proud in that area. That is why, again I say, we cannot compromise on CAAF, on the standards that it observes because it will impact on our standing as the hub of aviation in this country.

I would urge us all to support CAAF and we have a way out, as I stated from the beginning, and once you do that, everything will be cozy in here and strengthening our aviation and by extension, our tourism industry, which as you know is now 42 percent of our GDP. This was confirmed over the last couple of days in the function that we attended in Nadi. So, kudos to Fiji Airways, and I thank the Committee for their Report on the Annual Report for 2023.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the Review Report on the 2023 Fiji Airways Annual Report. Despite the pandemic, Fiji Airways growth continues to be remarkable. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak on the aviation biofuel and the potentials of this industry. As with many island economies, aviation fuel cost constitutes a significant share of operating expenses for airlines, airports and related services. Tourism remains Fiji's backbone, 27 international destinations, 26,586 flights and an estimate of 2.2 million passengers annually has been the statistics of Fiji Airways. We are proud, and I am very proud of our national airline, but it can be said that Fiji Airways spends almost \$1 billion annually in fuel consumption.

In order to increase profits, Fiji Airways needs to reduce its expenses, and its greatest expense is fuel. All of us as legislators, I think we need to find concrete solutions to aviation fuel. Exploring sustainable and locally produced fuel options could contribute to price stability, energy security, environmental performance and Fiji's decarbonisation efforts that is aligned with our National Development Plan and global climate commitments.

Most aviation biofuel programmes currently emphasize of first and second-generation bio jet fuels. Madam Deputy Speaker, if we talk about the struggling sugar industry, we always talk about the supply chain to produce sugar. Yet, we need to realise that sugar is just one of the end products. Fiji's long-standing sugar cane industry provides a natural foundation for developing ethanol as a domestically produced renewable fuel. Ethanol is produced from fermentation of sugarcane juice or molasses. In order to create ethanol-derived pathways, as part of Fiji's broader aviation decarbonisation strategy, we need to determine the amount of ethanol to jet fuel consumed, required sugar cane to be planted, human resource machinery, support structure, and lastly enough land to be acquired to action this plan.

From sugarcane to aviation ethanol-based fuel, this supply chain is a win-win billion-dollar pathway and a hope for the entire sugar industry. This will come at a cost, but through strategic financing and political will, I am sure we will be able to materialise this. By leveraging such value chains, this could help diversify sugar cane farmer incomes, increase landowner lease income and even royalty for them, reduce imported fuel dependence, and create a domestic market for ethanol that supports both road transport and aviation fuel pathways. Currently, Madam Deputy Speaker, domestic fuel costs, when you look at the importation cost it is up to \$1.5 billion every year. This is something that our nation can work towards.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we need to accept and work on the feedback from the passengers travelling in economy class. We also need to look at the domestic fares which many people complain are quite high. One of the Key Finding 3.7 - The Committee noted that Fiji Airways has invested \$130 million towards the construction of its aviation academy in Namaka, Nadi, but it has been addressed by Opposition and honourable Minister that they are looking into the careers of more than 100 students at Pacific Flying School. As I had spoken to the honourable Prime Minister, I still would seek his intervention into this matter.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Recommendation No. 4.8 - The Committee recommends that the Government must review and decrease the departure tax currently affecting the tourism industry, which is this Government's doing.

The two new aircraft, an added two state of the art Airbus A350-900 to its fleet as stated in the Report. I remember, back then a Member of the Opposition, current Minister now was seen eating a plane on *TikTok*, but now I know most of them have travelled in those planes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, just a quick reply to honourable Biman Prasad. He should be the last person talking about unilateral decisions. The VAT increase - 15 percent, 12 percent, looking at

the penalties for TELS students, he should be the last person talking about unilateral decisions; he should have consulted them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, coming back to the Report, I support the recommendations and thank the Committee for their work, and I thank the staff at Fiji Airways for their work.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the motion before the House on the Review of the 2023 Fiji Airways Financial Report. Allow me to begin with an education in history.

That side of the House continues to boast that everything good from Fiji Airways comes from them, and I would like to share this with them. In the late 1980s, Fiji Air Pacific, as it was called then, Madam Deputy Speaker, was on the verge of collapse. The late Ratu Mara rescued the airline. He put a tender together. The tender selected Qantas. Qantas selected a management team from Qantas, they came to Fiji to resuscitate the airline. They trained locals, one of them was me, and the airline is now in a different position.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my respectful comment to the other side of the House, leave credit or give credit where it is due. It is not your doing that there is success in Fiji Airways, it is from Ratu Mara's time. I thought I just make that very clear, Madam Deputy Speaker, because we continue to hear this, it is all to our credit, and sometimes it gets a bit tiresome.

Few things that were done at that time, which actually have transformed the Fijian economy, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is Ratu Mara's time. One, they decided to relocate the airline to Nadi. They closed down the Nausori operations and relocated to Nadi. Nadi is now what it is today, because of that decision.

Secondly, they shut down domestic aviation. At that time, they took the hard, tough decision to exit domestic aviation to focus on international aviation and the rest is history. So I thought I just educate that side of the House, they sort of seem to get preoccupied in the self-credit, I just thought I would educate them a little bit.

The second thing that I would like to point out, is that, in this Report, we are demonstrating or giving the other side of the House education in accountability and transparency. This is the first Report, ever tabled in this House to do with Fiji Airways. For the last 16 years, they were ducking and weaving and not producing any reports. So the credit goes to the honourable Prime Minister and the former Minister for Finance for actually disclosing properly to the people of Fiji, the financial report for Fiji Airways.

I thought I just touch, Madam Deputy Speaker, on some of the catalytic potential that this airline has just to sort of, support the findings of the Committee. What I always admire is the continuous selection of new routes by Fiji Airways. In 2023, they went to Canberra and Noumea. From the Canberra opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is now a coffee company from Canberra called ONA Coffee, now operating in and about to start in Fiji, to produce high-end coffee for this country. In terms of Noumea, we are now having serious discussions with not only Noumea, but French territories and that has come about from that decision.

On the construction of the Academy, I guess that was a very good strategic decision taken at the time. Just to give you an example, PNG Air, which is another airline in Papua New Guinea, just bought 14 ATRs. We introduced them to Fiji Airways, and as I understand it, they potentially will be training all their pilots through the flying school in Nadi.

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, we cannot but admire the continued success of Richmond Pte Limited, which is partly owned by Fiji Airways. They are now constructing Vatu Talei, which is the Sofitel high-end resort that is currently under construction. Upon completion, that will give about 500 new jobs for Fiji, and on top of that, they are in the process of doing further investments in tourism around the Nadi area, which will potentially generate another 200 jobs to 300 jobs within a space of two years to three years.

I thank the Standing Committee for their Report. If anything, it clearly emphasises the importance of this national carrier to our country, and it continues to be a major catalyst for our economy. I support the Report before the House.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable Kamikamica for raising the temperature a little bit in the House at 5.15 p.m. this afternoon, but let me raise it some more.

In addition to what the honourable Member has mentioned, regarding Qantas and the history of Fiji Airways, it is nice when you say those stories - very commendable, we appreciate it, but tell the whole story. With the Qantas issue, what the honourable Member forgot to say, was that Qantas put conditions that they would have veto power. Veto power meant that they were a minority shareholder, but they still had veto power. That was one of the conditions they put in order to get to where it is today. However, that was the objection that we had.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is also important that we realise this. Honourable Kamikamica said, “please give credit where it is due.” Yes, of course, but when you paint yourself with that brush, you should also paint it on the other side. Please, give credit where it is due - it is not just us; it is a continuation of the good policies that Fiji Airways was under for quite a while.

Let me remind the House that quite a while ago, during COVID-19, there was a Government Guarantee issue that came up in Parliament when we were in government on the other side, and they were in Opposition. They disagreed with it, and it is there in the *Daily Hansard*. That was to prop up and ensure that the airline would stay as Fiji's airline.

A lot was done and let us not deny it. Having said all of that, Madam Deputy Speaker, the best part to all of this is that everyone is actually singing the same tune, so let us stop fighting about what has happened in the past. Everyone is in the agreement that we are going to support this Report, and that Fiji Airways is our airline. It needs to grow, and it kept us afloat during COVID-19, it kept our traders trading, and it kept everything open. That is the Fiji Airways that exists now.

The Report has a lot in it that is positive, and honourable Kamikamica just spoke about it. The Aviation Academy, we are going to invest more, and the aircraft that has come in the A350s. I am so happy to hear, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the honourable Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation has now converted from Boeing to Airbus, because he was an avid Boeing flag flyer in this august House. Today, he has converted because he is on the other side, and he has flown in business class in the A350 and he supports it. Thank you, honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

It is actually commendable. I think, the Fiji Airways hierarchy, the Board from before and the Board now, has taken it to a new level, and obviously they are branching out. I am not sure if everyone knows this, but honourable Kamikamica mentioned about Richmond Pte Limited and the new 190 room that has come up, which is actually huge. That is another source of income for Fiji Airways. It is a different arm, but in the tourism industry, without Fiji Airways, we are nothing. We also have to keep everything in check in terms of the metal that flies in, and the metal that flies out, what we can do, whether we can do open skies, et cetera.

We must always look at it in terms of protecting Fiji Airways, because if we have another situation, God forbid, like COVID or natural disasters, without our own successful airline, our tourism industry would fall apart. It has happened in many other countries, and I am sure the honourable Deputy Prime Minister would agree with me. We have seen that happen where small island nations had their own airline, but they fell apart because there was not enough support.

All credit goes to all, including honourable Kamikamica, who was part and parcel of the restructuring programme. Obviously, thank you to the late Ratu Mara for seeing that he could do a whole lot more, and turn up in this House now and say that he did. Everyone who has taken part in the restructure and taken Fiji Airways to where it is today should be commended. For good or for bad, at the end of the day, I think we are all on the same page in terms of this Report, and the Standing Committee's recommendations are good.

I agree with the recommendations, and I am happy to see that they are helping the tourism industry grow, perhaps beating FNPF with respect to the hotel being built in Denarau in terms of the rooms that will be made available. At the end of the day, the important part is that they are finding new destinations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, permit me just a few seconds to say, it is commendable, not sure if the honourable Deputy Prime Minister can correct me, but I think we are number 15 in the world - that is some feat for us, a small country of not even a million people, with a massive airline. We are punching above our weight, and we should all be proud of Fiji Airways and what it has achieved, despite all that has happened.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I agree with the Report and the recommendations.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Deputy Speaker, the fact that we are having such a robust decent debate on Fiji Airways and its operation, is a credit to this Government. When we were in Opposition, when we were questioning the guarantee, when we were questioning what was happening in Fiji Airways, Government as a majority shareholder, this is precisely what we were saying: get the annual report tabled in Parliament. We promised that we would do that when we were in Opposition. This is exactly what we have done coming into Government.

Credit must also be given to this Government, Madam Deputy Speaker, because we facilitated, worked with the Board appointed by the previous government, and the CEO appointed by the previous government. We provided a very smooth and careful transition, not only in terms of the relationship with the Government and the way the airline was operating, but also making sure that all the workers who were unfairly treated, in some instances, by the company and the government previously through draconian laws during COVID, were all transitioned back to their jobs. Today, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the happiest groups of employees in this country are the employees of Fiji Airways. That is what this Government has done.

The other point I want to make, Madam Deputy Speaker, and both the honourable Minister of Finance, and honourable Kamikamica made, is that, we make sure that Fiji Airways, Government as a majority shareholder, is able to provide that transparency, that accountability, so that there is national movement, national ownership, national advocacy, and support for this important company, which is our national airline.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is also very important for us to understand that Fiji Airways as an entity, as a company, is not just a private company, but it is an entity that facilitates the broader economic fabric of our country, which is tourism.

We have to understand also that when an entity like that is supported by Government, Government guarantees their borrowing, then this is what we expect. This is what the taxpayers expect. This is what the people expect - transparency and accountability, and that can only be done through Annual Reports presented to Parliament. Today, this is a happy occasion because the people out there also can see that this is a Parliament which actually debates, which looks at where this majority shareholder Government company is going.

I know that honourable Rinesh Sharma talked about departure tax. He is new, and he has probably forgotten that departure tax in 2010, in fact, was increased from \$20 by these previous bosses to \$40; 2009 to \$75; 2010 to \$100; 2012 to \$150; 2014 to \$200; and today he is talking about the fact that we actually increased the departure tax. Yes, we increased it, but it is not even \$200 yet. I know what he does - he goes around Lautoka and tells all these lies that the Government has increased VAT and the tax.

No, Madam Deputy Speaker, the transition that we have made in terms of the departure tax and where Fiji Airways sits today, is a very considered decision by the Government to support the airline, to support what is happening around the economy of the airline, and the broader economy, which is tourism, and those related to it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman of Fiji Airways, Board members, and the former CEO. We have a new and very competent appointed CEO today, and we are very confident that the way in which the Government has supported Fiji Airways in a transparent accountable manner, that Fiji Airways will grow, and will play a very important role in the economic fabric of this country.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.– Before I call upon the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs to speak in reply, I would like to welcome back to the House and from the sidelines, honourable Usamate and honourable Alvick Maharaj, whose suspension ended about three minutes ago.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.– Madam Deputy Speaker, the Standing Committee noted the positive and negative contributions made by honourable Members during this debate on the Review Report on Fiji Airways' 2023 Annual Report.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank the Board members, Executive Management and staff of Fiji Airways for their commitment and unwavering support which have been instrumental to the successful operation of our national carrier. I humbly request Fiji Airways for the successful implementation of the recommendations put forward by the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I support the motion before the House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.– The Parliament will now vote to note the content of the report.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED REVIEW REPORT ON THE WATER AUTHORITY OF FIJI 2019-2022 ANNUAL REPORTS

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that:

Parliament debates the Consolidated Review Report on Water Authority of Fiji's 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Annual Reports which were tabled on 5th November, 2025.

HON. V. NATH.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise as the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources to present the Standing Committee's observation on the Water Authority of Fiji's Annual Reports for 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. These Reports were tabled in Parliament on Wednesday, 5th November, 2025.

The Report provides a comprehensive overview of Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) operation during a challenging period for the nation, marked by pandemic disruption, ageing infrastructure and financial pressure.

The Standing Committee acknowledged the Authority's achievement notably, WAF's expanded connection, maintaining essential services, and continued key rehabilitation works. These efforts reflect the commitment to improving water access for urban and rural communities alike.

However, there are important concerns that warrant Parliamentary scrutiny:

- (1) Timeliness and completeness of the audit financial statement remains an issue. The Auditor General has highlighted delays, and the Standing Committee will seek commitments on delivering reliable accounts promptly.
- (2) Non-revenue water losses due to leaks and billing efficiency continue to be high. Reducing the losses is critical for final sustainability and service reliability.
- (3) Service equity is another concern while national coverage has improved, rural, remote and informal settlements still face gaps.

The WAF maintains a highly reliable standby operation system, ensuring continuity of service during power interruption and natural disasters through the use of backup generators and robust emergency protocols. We also note the need for improvement of transparency in projects, delivery governance and procurement process with clear reporting on major capital projects. The status timeline in budget use will be essential for public accountability.

In closing, Madam Deputy Speaker, access to fresh, reliable and affordable water is fundamental to the public health, economic development, and climate resilience. The Standing Committee will continue to work with the WAF and the Ministry to ensure stronger transparency, better project delivery, and improved services for every Fijian.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will now go to the debate, and each speaker will speak for up to five minutes. My list is in front of me, and we will begin with honourable Tuisawau.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to the Water Authority of Fiji's Annual Reports. Given the limited time, I will go through some of the recommendations in front of us.

The WAF remains committed to transparency, accountability and continuous improvement.

Recommendation No. 1 - Infrastructure Planning and Investment

WAF confirms that critical water and wastewater infrastructure has already been identified and costed in the Water Sector Strategy 2050, launched in April 2024. The WAF has further prioritised high-impact projects for the first five years of their plan (2025–2030) and is actively engaging potential donor partners, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and others.

The Water and Wastewater Masterplan provides the technical foundation for these investments. Significant donor support, particularly from ADB and AIIB, is enabling WAF to strengthen project management capacity, modernize systems, and expedite delivery across key urban and rural areas.

The WAF is also securing land for future facilities, even with commissioning dates projected 5, 10, and 15 years ahead, demonstrating a strong commitment to meeting current and future demands.

Recommendation No. 2: Stakeholder Engagement

The WAF has established Stakeholder Engagement Officers in all regions to collaborate with Government Ministries, Advisory Councillors, and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These officers deliver community engagement programs across the Central, Western, and Northern Divisions. Key initiatives include:

- (1) Water Champion Programme for schools;
- (2) Rural Water Committee Training;
- (3) Conservation messaging during El Nino events;
- (4) Debt and consumption awareness campaigns;
- (5) Nationwide roadshows and participation in Fiji Showcase; and
- (6) Digital engagement via the WAF App, Viber, and SMS platforms

These interventions promote responsible water usage and improve service reliability for all Fijians.

Recommendation No. 3: Public Awareness

The WAF is intensifying public awareness efforts across its three regions through community visits, mainstream media campaigns, and of course digital platforms. These initiatives aim to strengthen responsible water-use practices, a major national priority under the Water Sector Strategy 2050. Collectively, these programmes advance WAF's goal of reducing Non-Revenue Water (NRW), which is one of the key problems areas mentioned in the Report.

Recommendation No. 4: Land Lease Agreements

The WAF engages with the iTaukei Lands Trust Board (iTLTB) regarding lease agreements for native land used for water catchment areas and infrastructure projects. Consent is obtained from respective Land-Owning Units (LOUs) before iTLTB issues an Agreement for Lease (AFL). Also, WAF negotiates these offers through registered valuers or the Director of Lands Valuation Unit. Surveys and title registrations follow to formalise agreements. Standardised lease conditions apply, with additional requirements based on lease type, LOU negotiations, and statutory obligations.

Recommendation No. 5: Security of Water Infrastructure

The WAF has strengthened security and surveillance across critical water infrastructure in line with the Committee's recommendation and the Water Sector Strategy 2050. Measures include:

- (1) Installation of CCTV systems;
- (2) Upgraded perimeter fencing and lighting; and
- (3) Controlled access mechanisms at dams, reservoirs, pump stations, and treatment plants

The WAF works closely with the Fiji Police Force, RFMF, and NDMO for joint inspections, intelligence-sharing, and rapid response to incidents. Catchment protection is also reinforced through lease agreements with iTLTB as we move forward.

Recommendation No. 6: Wastewater Infrastructure Expansion

We are moving forward in these areas as already identified in the Water Sector Strategy 2050. Key initiatives include:

- (1) Kinoya Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade under ADB's Healthy Oceans and Water Security Improvement Project.
- (2) Two new treatment plants for the Lami-Naboro Corridor and Nasinu-Nausori Corridor.
- (3) Feasibility studies for three new plants in Lautoka and Nadi.
- (4) Na Vualiku Project funded by the World Bank for Savusavu wastewater scheme.
- (5) Upgrades to Namara WWTP in Labasa and additional facilities for future demand.

Further exploration has been made in terms of innovative, low-energy, decentralised wastewater treatment solutions, as we move forward to safeguard the environment, maintain public health.

Recommendation No. 7: Environmental Compliance

The WAF is committed to complying with all relevant environmental legislation, including:

- (1) Environment Management Act 2005;
- (2) Environment Management (EIA Process) Regulations 2007; and
- (3) Environment Management (Waste Disposal & Recycling) Regulations 2007

Audit Issue: Asset Valuation

Madam Deputy Speaker, a major audit was conducted and assessed in terms of asset valuation. As of today, from that asset valuation, the total value of worth assets stands at approximately \$3.6 billion, reflecting the scale and importance of our national water infrastructure.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Board of Water Authority of Fiji, the CEO and staff, and of course, the staff at the head office. Those who are working at every level, and especially those at the operational levels in terms of fixing water leaks, et cetera. Sometimes they are working into the night during rainy weather and in very difficult conditions. I would like to acknowledge and pay tribute to them today as we move forward in terms of our water services.

HON. J.N. NAND.- I rise today to speak on a matter that is not just critical to our national development, but fundamental to the dignity of every Fijian family - the state of our water supply. My sentiments today are deliberately directed at the future, not the past. They are intended to be the critical, the process, support of the objective of clean, reliable water and sanitation for all.

The Water Authority of Fiji has dedicated and hard-working staff, and we must acknowledge their efforts on the ground. Good intentions, Madam Deputy Speaker, is no substitute for solid and accountable execution. We have just completed a deep dive into WAF's operations over several years, a period marked by massive investment and chronic failures.

We must now talk plainly about the missing link, the executable plan. For years successively, WAF's Annual Reports have flagged one extreme risk, and that is ageing infrastructure and Non-Revenue Water (NRW). The NRW figure - water lost before it even reaches the paying customer is currently reported at around 45 percent. Nearly half of our treated water vanishes into the ground because we fail systematically replace pipelines-built decades ago. When we inject new capacity into old arteries, the old arteries rupture. We have invested hundreds of millions to fill the cup, only to watch half of it spill into the dirt. This is not progress. This is an expensive failure of sequencing and priority management. This Parliament approved the funding for asset renewal, yet the infrastructure gave way exactly where WAF's own risk analysis predicted.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is public knowledge that a staggering 75 percent of our people in rural communities still do not have access to clean water. In 2025, after decades of national planning and endless efforts, three out of every four Fijians in rural area are still drinking water that is not clean, not safe, and not reliably supplied. This is a public health crisis and a moral failure. We are asking the Government to secure funds to deliver our basic fundamental right of clean water to the majority of its rural population.

We talk about Water Sector Strategy 2050, a plan spanning 25 years and costing a proposed \$8.5 billion. It is a bold vision, but what good is a vision of 2050, when reality in 2025 is broken pipes and cartage water. Madam Deputy Speaker, as an Opposition, we are ready to be supportive, but we demand accountability. We need a clear, actionable, cross-generational water action plan that transcends the electoral cycle. We need a plan that is brutally honest about the phasing:

- Stop the leakage - A dedicated, hyper-aggressive plan to reduce Non-Revenue Water to below 25 percent in five years, prioritising the replacement of aged pipes that breaks every time a new scheme is commissioned.
- Rural equity - a fully funded, legally binding scheme for achieving the rural water supply master plan. We need milestones, names and delivery dates for the 73 percent of our rural population.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the last point is financial reality. We support the objective of WAF's financial autonomy, but that requires a realistic tariff plan, review and a crackdown on the nearly \$30 million in outstanding arrears. That is not about politics, this is about governance. Our citizens need a better and an not an administration that spends its time lamenting over inherited problems instead of solving them.

At the juncture, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to draw the honourable Minister's attention to the frequent water cuts at Cuvu settlement. That is about 3,000 residents, four villages, a secondary school that is Cuvu College, a primary school, Nadovi Primary School, a health centre, FSC sector office and mini Cuvu town, which has 23 registered businesses.

Also, Madam Deputy Speaker, many mornings there is a low water supply in Olosara settlement which has about 2,000 citizens. Imagine the frustration of children, mothers and workers who get ready to go to school every day and the last thing they want is low water pressure in the pipes. That has been ongoing for a number of years.

I urge the Water Authority of Fiji, to immediately look into this and provide a solution before this Christmas and festive season. The people of Sigatoka deserve better. We must resolve today to finalise a pragmatic plan to deliver water to every Fijian and finally move this nation past the same of 73 percent of rural water deficit. The time for lament is over, the time for action is now.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be brief. My response will focus on Recommendation 5, and it reads, the Committee recommends that WAF engage in a consultation with stakeholders, landowners to provide standardised lease agreement for water catchment areas, infrastructure and development projects.

Madam Deputy Speaker, before I speak on the recommendation, I join the honourable Minister for Infrastructure in acknowledging the work done by the staff and management of Water Authority of Fiji. I appreciate their work ethics, commitment and resilience, and I thank them for the hard work that they have been doing, despite constraints in resources they are facing.

To speak on the recommendation, I believe this is an area where the past government has failed to design a special lease for catchment zones.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hogwash!

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Based on the visits that we have done to most of the WAF stations, the complaints by the employees the regular interruptions, interference of the landowners to the stations that affects their work. I believe the motive was that they were not happy with the lease agreement that they were being given.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBER.- Hogwash!

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- I believe the current lease agreement does not really reflect the importance of water in our lives. We all understand the importance of water in our lives, in our community, and in our social and economic development. Without water, we are nothing. The lease needs to be designed in such a way that reflects the importance of water. I believe that is where the previous government has failed to design such a lease to reflect the importance of water.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I have said, I will be brief and I am glad that the current Minister and his stakeholders are working to redesign a lease specifically for water catchment zones to reflect the importance of water. We all understand, for hotel lease, the landowners get 4 percent return on the gross turnover of the hotels. Why can we not do that to the lease of the water catchment area? This is a sort of investment for the landowners. They will forego their lease for hundreds of years, generations to come, they will not touch their land. I beg the Committee and the honourable Minister if they can relook at the lease and consider some of the principles that are in other leases like the hotel lease, where a certain percentage of gross turnover is returned to the landowners for their livelihoods.

HON. V. NATH.- Madam Deputy Speaker, as a Member of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, I rise to speak in support of the Consolidated Review Report on the Water Authority of Fiji Annual Report from 2019 to 2022. A Report that reflects months of careful scrutiny, extensive consultation and a genuine commitment by the Committee to serve our people. Our Committee undertook this review with one purpose - to understand the challenges affecting water delivery in Fiji, and to provide practical and achievable recommendations that can improve service delivery to all Fijians.

Throughout this review, we heard from stakeholders, examined performance trends and analysed Water Authority of Fiji's progress over the three financial years. What became clear is that water security remains one of Fiji's most pressing development issues, and the findings of our Committee affirms the urgent need for accelerated reform and implementation. Our Committee observed significant ageing infrastructure across the country, old pipes, undersized systems and treatment plants were long overdue for upgrade. This witnessed the root cause of many of the

disruptions our community faces. That is why we strongly recommended that Water Authority prioritise infrastructure rehabilitation, especially in high-risk areas and high-density population. As a Committee Member, I fully endorse this recommendation and urge WAF to move quickly to reduce future failures and costs.

The Committee repeatedly heard concerns over slow response time to water outage, leak repair and burst mains. We, therefore, recommend enhanced communication system, better tracking and strong coordination between local authorities. I want to emphasise, timely updates are not optional. People have a right to know what is happening when water is cut off for hours or days.

Our Committee placed great importance on transparency reporting. We have recommended clearer justification for project delays, cost verification, cost variation and timelines for water projects on hold. Transparency will restore public confidence. As a Committee Member, I urge WAF to publish progress updates regularly and ensure that all major decisions are communicated effectively.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Committee paid special attention to communities outside the urban centres. Mainly rural households continue to struggle with inconsistent water supply and inadequate infrastructure. We have recommended that WAF prioritise service delivery for vulnerable communities, and I strongly support this.

No Fijian should be left behind, especially because of geography. Our Committee also highlighted the urgent need for enhanced resilience to cyclones, drought, flooding and saltwater intrusion. Climate impacts are intensifying, and the Fiji water system must be prepared. Water Authority must invest in resilient designs, improved storage, and a system capable of withstanding extreme weather conditions.

The Report our Committee has tabled is not just an assessment. It is a roadmap for action. As a Member of the Committee, I now call on the Water Authority of Fiji to:

- (1) Implement our recommendations with urgency.
- (2) Publish clear timelines for major upgrades.
- (3) Provide progress updates to Parliament and the Committee.
- (4) Engage more effectively with communities and stakeholders.
- (5) Ensure equitable water supply across all Divisions.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the water challenge faced by our nation is not insurmountable. With decisive leadership and swift action, WAF can deliver reliable, safe water to all Fijians that they deserve. I commend the Report and the work carried out by WAF staff and the Parliament staff, who accompanied us to places, like Nasilasila Reservoir, Navau and Venau Water Supply, et cetera. I urge WAF to act quickly and continue with this development planned network to meet its contribution to National Development Plan.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate on the Report before the House. I am also standing here, wholeheartedly supporting the statement delivered by the honourable Minister and to reinforce our Ministry's collective commitment in building a water sector that truly meets the needs and aspirations of our people.

As I reflect on the Committee's findings, particularly Recommendations Nos. 7, 8, and 9, I am reminded that water is not just an essential service, it is a lifeline for every Fijian, for every family, every community and the future generation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Recommendation No. 7 speaks on improving governance, strengthening compliance and lifting accountability. This is not just a policy requirement, it is a moral obligation to our people who depend on us for safe, reliable and sustainable water services.

I am informed that the Water Authority of Fiji has already taken decisive steps in this direction to strengthen its internal systems through the development of a comprehensive environmental and social management system. These frameworks ensure that every major decision, whether it involves land acquisition, pollution control, environmental protection, cultural heritage, or worker and community safety is guided by internationally recognised standards.

Water Authority of Fiji is also consistently meeting its reporting obligations to the Department of Environment, ensuring transparency in water quality monitoring, waste disposal reporting, incident response and project compliance. These are not small achievements; they are indicators of the water sector that is maturing and becoming more accountable as envisaged under the Water Sector Strategy 2050 launched in April last year.

On Recommendation 8, it focuses on climate resilience, and this is something I feel deeply about. It is why I am deeply reassured that the Water Authority of Fiji has embraced climate resilience as a core pillar of its long-term strategy. They have been progressing major upgrades to flood management systems, improving the resilience of pipelines in high-risk areas and expanding the use of modern technologies such as the telemetry stations, automated water level sensors and LiDAR-based watershed mapping to better understand and protect our water sources. I am particularly heartened by WAF's effort to explore innovative solutions such as the WaveDem mobile system which are designed to support water supply stability during periods of drought. This reflects not only forward thinking but a genuine care for the communities we serve, ensuring that even in times of climate uncertainty, they will continue to receive safe and reliable water.

On Recommendation 9, it calls for the development of standard operating procedures to strengthen coordination among all stakeholders before projects commence. I welcome WAF's commitment to formalising SOPs that will bring clarity and discipline to how projects are rolled out, from land acquisition and environmental screening to utility coordination, statutory approvals and final project closure. So, SOPs will all be observed in the various processes. This is not an administrative exercise. It is about ensuring that when we promise a community that development is coming, we deliver it efficiently and honourably. These SOPs will help avoid bottlenecks and improve communications, ultimately ensuring that projects reach our people faster and with greater predictability.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as an Assistant Minister, I want to state clearly that the Ministry stands firmly behind the honourable Minister's vision and leadership and the direction set through the Fiji Water Sector Strategy 2050. This strategy is a commitment to every household, rural settlement and urban centre so that their needs will be met with dignity and foresight. The work being done by WAF, as highlighted through these recommendations, gives me confidence that we are heading in the right direction. Our collective efforts ensure that the vision of resilience, efficient and people-centred water sector becomes a reality.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge WAF's entire team, from the directors, the management and the staff at all levels for their hard work and commitment to ensure that all Fijians are provided with environmentally sound, sustainable and efficient water and wastewater services. Madam Deputy Speaker, I support the motion before the House.

HON. K.V. RAVU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to thank the honourable Members for their positive and valuable contributions to these Consolidated Review Reports on the Water

Authority of Fiji 2019-2022 Annual Reports.

I also express my profound appreciation to the Water Authority of Fiji for their tireless efforts and continued commitment demonstrated throughout the period under review in the Committee's Report. This progress towards improving water service delivery enhanced through a national strategic priority, has been commendable.

I wish to thank all honourable Committee Members and secretariat, whose positive and consultative engagement has been vital in the compilation of this comprehensive and bipartisan Report. Madam Deputy Speaker, I fully support the motion before the House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote to note the content of the Report.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED REVIEW REPORT ON THE 2019-2023 AUDIT REPORT ON STATUTORY AUTHORITIES, INDEPENDENT BODIES AND COMMISSIONS

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Consolidated Review Report of the Auditor- General on the 2019-2020, 2021-2022 and 2023 Audit Report on Statutory Authorities, Independent Bodies and Commissions which was tabled in November 2025.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to present to Parliament the Consolidated Report of the Auditor-General of the Republic of Fiji covering the financial years from 2019-2020, 2021-2022 and 2023 which encompasses the audits of the Statutory Authorities, Independent Bodies and Commissions across 12 entities.

This Report has been prepared in accordance with the constitutional and statutory mandate of the Office of the Auditor-General to provide Parliament with an independent assurance on the stewardship, accountability and transparency of public resources entrusted to these institutions.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Consolidated Auditor-General's Report emphasises that Statutory Authorities, Independent Bodies and Commissions must prepare annual financial statements within the legislative deadlines under their established laws, regulations and the Finance Management Act, generally three to six months after year-end, or as soon as possible if no date is specified.

Madam Deputy Speaker, entities are required to comply with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and relevant legislation, yet audits of 27 statutory authorities, eight commissions and one independent body revealed significant shortcomings. Forty (40) percent of the audits were modified, in other words, 17 per cent were disclaimers, and 23 percent were qualified. The financial reporting was assessed as 73 percent ineffective in quality and timeliness.

The Committee further highlighted the governance weaknesses across many entities, particularly the absence of risk management policies such as Disaster Recovery Frameworks and Business Continuity Plans.

The audit revealed widespread internal control weaknesses across multiple entities and remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is in that side of the House's term. The deficiency included cash and revenue management, journal voucher documentation and reconciliations, procurement processes, payroll controls, and asset management. Basically, everything was a mess. Significant issues were also noted in the timeliness and quality of the financial reporting, outdated or inadequate policies and procedures, weak corporate governance, poor records of management and ineffective use of software. Additionally, concerns were raised about high salary levels for key personnel in certain agencies and the lack of regular updates to organisational policies and procedures.

Madam Deputy Speaker, given the anomalies and the significant matters found in the Report, the Committee urged urgent action to resolve common governance and financial reporting issues, calling on training for accounting staff, timely submission of audited accounts, stronger Chief Executive Officer (CEO) oversight, risk management disaster recovery plans by 2026, adoption of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), et cetera.

The Committee emphasised the need for all Statutory Authorities, Independent Bodies and Commissions to prepare and submit annual financial statements on time in compliance with the Financial Management Act, IFRS and relevant laws, noting that 40 percent of the entities had negative reporting, as I have alluded to.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is highlighted that these recurring governance deficiencies such as lack of risk management, disaster recovery and business continuity frameworks which weaken institutional resilience, we recommend urgent action by responsible officers to ensure that timely audits are done, governance is strengthened and improve accountability in the management of public funds.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. I do have a list with me, and I ask all honourable Members to speak for up to five minutes before we have the right of reply.

HON. J.R. VOCEA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to offer my contribution to the Consolidated Review Report of the Auditor-General's Report, Parliamentary Paper Nos. 104 of 2021, 114 of 2023, and 184 of 2024, covering audits of 27 Statutory Authorities, eight Independent Commissions and one Independent Body, which are all condensed and consolidated into one single Report.

The Report uncovers several generic systemic issues contributing to audit delays and poor financial governance, such as:

- (1) Late or incomplete submissions of draft accounts;
- (2) delayed management response to audit queries;
- (3) slow return of signed financial statements hindering timely audit opinions;
- (4) failure to provide records thus limiting audited scope;
- (5) entities revising draft reports before resubmissions causing further delays;
- (6) unsupported account balances due to missing documents;
- (7) inaccurate financial statements revealing weak reporting systems;
- (8) poor payroll controls leading to salary discrepancies; and

(9) weak asset management increasing risk of theft or misuse.

The findings above reflect a broader need for structured financial systems and stronger internal controls.

Some of the recommendations need immediate and appropriate attention to address issues which are raised in the Audit Reports prepared by the Office of the Auditor-General. This is to ensure that common significant matters are resolved or addressed, and that it is not recurring every year.

Accounting personnel should be provided with the necessary training in all aspects of the financial reporting, and to remain updated with changes in the relevant financial reporting standards. This promotes quality in the financial statements submitted for audit, and it also provides opportunities for accounting personnel to address and resolve common issues that are recurring.

The CEOs of entities are to strengthen their internal control mechanisms and provide necessary support to ensure that control weaknesses are addressed and that they are functioning properly. This will help ensure that financial statements are submitted for audit on a timely basis and enhance the quality of financial statements being submitted for audit. The CEOs must ensure that entities submit Annual Reports, the Auditor's Report and Audited Financial Statements as required by the relevant legislation and the Financial Management Act 2004. They must ensure to also comply with the legislative deadline.

The Government should consider extending the Financial Management Information System (FMIS) to Statutory Authorities, Independent Bodies and Commissions to standardise financial management and maintaining autonomy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, just by looking at the Report, it was noted that some of the audited accounts dated back to 2003, and I hope that with the bi-partisan approach that we are now undertaking with the Standing Committee, looking at talking to all those who are in charge of these entities to try and uplift their tempo in improving their accounts, so that when we come to the current accounts, there should be a marked improvement in the way that we look at the accounts for our statutory organisations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the debate before the House.

HON. H. CHAND.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate on the Report before the House. I will focus on the findings and recommendations relating to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the iTaukei Affairs Board.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Auditor-General's Report is not merely an administrative exercise, it is a mirror reflecting the standards of governance, accountability, and stewardship expected of our public institutions. When gaps or weaknesses are identified, it becomes our collective duty as members of this House to address them with seriousness and clarity.

The recommendations concerning the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the iTaukei Affairs Board are significant because they relate to an institution central to cultural preservation, community development, and the wellbeing of the iTaukei people. Allow me, Madam Deputy Speaker, to elaborate on the three key recommendations of the Standing Committee.

Firstly, appointment of new CEO to clearly demarcate roles between the Permanent Secretary and the CEO of the iTaukei Affairs Board. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Auditor-General highlights

a longstanding governance challenge, an unclear distinction between the roles of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry and the Chief Executive Officer of the iTaukei Affairs Board. This is not a minor administrative issue where responsibilities overlap, and accountability is diluted.

Staff become uncertain about reporting lines, decisions are delayed, and service delivery to the grassroot suffers. The role of the Permanent Secretary is clearly articulated in the Constitution and Government policy frameworks to provide administrative leadership, ensure compliance, and implement national policies. The CEO of the Board, however, is responsible for operational execution, managing programmes, coordinating provincial activities and delivering services directly to communities. If these roles are not properly defined and respected, operational efficiency declines.

Therefore, Madam Deputy Speaker, I strongly support the Standing Committee's recommendation that the Ministry formalise, document, and appoints a new and separate CEO to lead the iTaukei Affairs Board. This ensures accountability, reduces institutional friction, and strengthens governance with both the Ministry and the Board.

Secondly, strict compliance with Open Merit Recruitment and Selection (OMRS). Madam Deputy Speaker, the second recommendation concerns the recruitment and appointment of staff within the iTaukei Affairs Board, including the CEO position. The Standing Committee emphasises the need for full compliance with the OMRS guidelines. OMRS is not optional, it is a requirement designed to ensure fairness, professionalism, and the appointment of the most qualified individuals to public service positions. When appointments deviate from merit-based processes, the public service suffers, performance weakens, staff morale declines, service delivery becomes inconsistent, and worst of all, confidence in the institution erodes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the iTaukei Affairs Board plays a very important role in supporting traditional structures, promoting cultural preservation, and facilitating development across the *vanua*. It is imperative that those entrusted with leadership and technical roles are appointed strictly on merit, competence, and proven capability. That is what the OMRS, the law and good governance demands. I, therefore, support the Standing Committee's strong call for the Ministry and the Board to ensure all appointments adhere to the OMRS transparently and without exception.

Thirdly, Board appointments must comply with the law and be based on merit. The third recommendation pertains to the appointment of members to the iTaukei Affairs Board. The Governing Act and its regulations set out the criteria for Board appointments, including the need for specialised knowledge, demonstrated expertise, and representation consistent with requirements. Board members hold significant responsibility, and they oversee strategic direction, risk management, financial stewardship, and cultural governance.

In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker, the essence of all three recommendations is simple – strengthen governance, strengthen accountability and strengthen service delivery. The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the iTaukei Affairs Board carry enormous cultural, social, and administrative responsibility. Implementing these recommendations will ensure that the institution is better positioned to empower communities, safeguard traditions, and meet the expectations of our people.

I commend the Standing Committee for its work and urge the Ministry and the Board to implement the recommendations swiftly and effectively. I support the motion before the House.

HON. I. VASU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for their hard work, thorough and truthful presentation. My response is focused specifically on the Standing Committee's recommendations with respect to the iTaukei Affairs Board on page 21 of their Report.

Recommendation No. 1.1: Concerted effort to ensure that the accounts are promptly updated by 31st July 2026.

The iTaukei Affairs Board wishes to advise that the financial statement for period 21 to 28 has already been submitted to the Office of the Auditor-General for audit. Further, the financial statement for 2019 to 2021 was submitted to the Office of the Auditor-General yesterday, while the financial statement for 2022 to 2024 will be submitted by 12th December, 2025.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on the improvement in its financial management practise by implementing a structured, organised and searchable system for storing financial records. The iTaukei Affairs Board, as part of its Financial Year 2025-2026 plan, is taking steps to implement a structured, organised and searchable system for storing financial records through a document management system. This initiative will include:

- (1) establishing a centralised digital database for all documents;
- (2) introducing a standardised filing protocol to ensure consistency and ease of access at headquarters and all provincial councils;
- (3) enhancing search financially to allow quick retrieval of records when required; and
- (4) providing training and support to staff to ensure effective use of the system.

Recommendation No. 2.1: Recruitment of staff, members of the Board and Chairpersons of the iTaukei Affairs Board to be on merit basis

The iTaukei Affairs Board is currently ensuring an external review of its key governance documents, including HR Policy, financial manual and audit framework. This review, conducted by KPMG, aims at strengthening compliance and aligning procedures with the industry's best practices. The exercise is expected to be completed by December 2025.

We have further ensured that selection criteria and competency are based on qualification, skills, and relevant experience for each role going forward. It should be noted that the appointment of the Chairperson and members of the Board is undertaken strictly in accordance with the provision of the iTaukei Affairs Regulation.

Recommendation 2.2: Separate and demarcate the roles of Permanent Secretary and Chief Executive Officer

A paper on the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has been tabled before the Human Resource (HR) Committee with the aim of filling these posts. Once the CEO job description has been endorsed by the HR Committee, the position will be advertised to ensure a transparent and merit-based recruitment process.

On the comprehensive review and structure of the Board in consultation with key stakeholders, the recent iTaukei Administration Review Report has already highlighted the need to strengthen institutional arrangements and improve stakeholders' representation.

Recommendation No. 4: Review and regulations to implement clear and comprehensive policy and guidelines to govern and guide all affiliated entities, provincial councils, and provincial companies

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Board has initiated a process to review existing regulations and develop comprehensive policies and guidelines that will provide a consistent framework for governance, accountability, and operational efficiency across all affiliated entities. The Board is committed to strengthening oversight, ensuring that provincial councils and provincial companies operate with transparency, accountability, and effectiveness in fulfilling their mandate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the Chairman and honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for their Report. I also thank the financial team of the iTaukei Affairs Board for working overtime to update the outstanding accounts that were supposed to be submitted to the Office of the Auditor-General, and I support the motion before the House.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Consolidated Review Report of the Auditor-General on Statutory Authorities, Independent Bodies and Commissions for the period 2019 to 2023.

The Opposition acknowledges the OAG and the Public Accounts Committee for their tireless work in consolidating and highlighting the systematic deficiencies. However, we must register our deep concern and, indeed, the concern of every Fijian taxpayer, that for years there has been a culture of laxity and non-compliance. The Consolidated Review Report paints a clear picture of failure evolving around two critical areas - financial discipline and corporate governance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at the outset, I must also say that we are dealing with the Consolidated Review Report of Statutory Authorities, Independent Bodies and Commissions. The Government has no say over the operations. It is on the Chief Accounting Officers, CEOs, and the Boards that actually manage these bodies and commissions. They are the ones responsible, and the delay should not be blamed on the previous government. It is an independent authority we are dealing with.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Report clearly shows the basic foundation of accountability. Producing timely and accurate financial statements is collapsing in many entities. Unsatisfactory performance, the finding that nearly 73 percent of the entities reviewed were assessed as unsatisfactory for the quality and timeliness of their financial statements, is simply unacceptable. This indicates widespread management incompetence of Chief Accounting Officers. They should be taken to task, and this should be part of their KPIs.

Qualified opinions and disclaimer opinions. Madam Deputy Speaker, the frequent issuance of modifying, qualified and disclaimer of opinion is deeply concerning. A disclaimer of opinion means the auditor could not even obtain sufficient evidence to form an opinion. This is not a matter of few minor errors, it means for years significant sums of public money have been managed in a way that is non-auditable or unaccountable.

The existence of multi-year backlog represents a grave failure. These delays create a massive information vacuum preventing Parliament, responsible Ministries and the public from holding boards and the management to account in a timely manner.

Beyond the numbers, the structural issue pointed out in the Report demonstrates a complete breakdown of internal controls. We see recurring deficiencies in the most fundamental aspects of

control, risk assessment, control activities and monitoring. This suggests that money, assets and decisions are being made without proper cheques and balances creating an environment rife with mismanagement and potential corruption.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts, since day one, has been recommending that all entities should have an internal audit department, but CEOs and Board members have failed drastically in that, and it reflects in their audit report.

The Report highlights serious governance gaps including the absence of formal risk management policies and failure to implement disaster recovery and Business Continuity Plan (BCP). This demonstrates a casual attitude towards failure and resilience of this key institution putting the operation at risk from both natural disasters and operational failures.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Opposition insists that this Report must not be another document that simply gathers dust. We call upon the Government to implement immediate and structural reform based on the Office of the Auditor-General's findings. The responsible Ministers must issue a clear non-negotiable directive that all financial accounts and backlog must be updated and audited by the end of the next financial year which we propose to be 31st July, 2026.

For any entity failing this mandate without justifiable cause, the entire Board and Chief Executive Officer must face immediate removal for gross negligence and failure to adherence to the Financial Management Act. Accountability must start at the very top.

The Government must enforce the immediate adoption of a standardised internal control framework across all such free authorities and commissions. This includes making it mandatory for every entity to establish a functional audit comprised of members with proven financial expertise. The OAG's recommendation on Risk Management Frameworks (RMFs) and Business Continuity Plan must be adopted as prerequisites for assessing any new government funding opportunities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to address the lack of efficiency that skill shortages prevail into smaller bodies, the Government must heed the longstanding recommendation of rationalising the merging of certain statutory authorities. Entities with overlapping functions or small administrative footprints, for example, mentioned in the previous Standing Committee Report should be systematically examined for merger to allow for shared high-level resources, for example, accountants and internal auditors. This not only creates cost efficiencies, but directly tackles the chronic skills shortage identified by the Office of the Auditor-General.

The work of Auditor-General is paramount. The House must ensure that OAG is provided with adequate and independent funding and resourcing as mandated under the Constitution.

This is the trust issue. The ordinary Fijian works hard and pays their tax, and they expect that every dollar spent by their government and the agencies to be accounted accurately, transparently and on time.

We call upon the Government to treat OAG's recommendation, not as a suggestion, but as an urgent directive to restore accountability and safeguard the financial security of the nation. We must end this era of systematic governance failure. We must implement a culture of ownership and discipline.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I support the motion before the House.

HON. S. KIRAN.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to contribute to the issues raised on the National Council for Persons with Disabilities Audited Accounts.

The Ministry acknowledges the Office of the Auditor-General's Reports for the financial years of 2019-2020 and 2021-2022. These findings call for improved, quality and timely financial reporting with strict adherence to international financial reporting standards. They also highlight the need to reinforce governance frameworks, as honourable Kamikamica has already shared. Also, to strengthen accountability and establish key safeguards, including a risk management plan, regular boards of survey and a disaster recovery plan. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) is a statutory body that was established through the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act. The Council has a secretariat support that is under the leadership of the Executive Director, as stipulated in the Act, responsible for its management and execution of its policy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have just appointed a new Executive Director in August 2025. We have also appointed a new Finance Officer and Human Resource Officer. These officers are currently reviewing the financial manual of the Council and working with the Council to address the issues that have been highlighted by the Office of the Auditor-General.

Our Ministry in partnership with the National Council of Persons with Disabilities Secretariat, with the support from DFAT-funded platform is engaging a strategic advisor who will start work in January 2026 to assess the current disability sector in Fiji, including governance structure, service provision, data systems for learning and reporting purposes and stakeholder coordination.

Also, we will be identifying gaps, overlaps, inefficiencies in the current framework of coordination, reporting and learning and hopefully we will provide actionable recommendations for strengthening disability inclusion, equity rights and policy implementation.

The National Council of Persons with Disabilities has a master plan, Madam Deputy Speaker, for its complex, which includes storage space and disaster recovery plan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the risk management is embedded in the financial manual which will be revised once the strategic advisor is engaged. The Board of Survey remains under review while the IT system has already been assessed. As part of the NCPD master plan, priority is being given to the expansion of services at Brown Street facilities, ensuring stronger oversight, modernised systems and improved service delivery for our people.

For monitoring and evaluation, a second technical assistant is being funded by the platform. The monitoring, evaluation and learning advisor will lead the design and development of a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning framework that will align the goals and outcomes of the Fiji National Policy and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities launched this year. It will integrate inclusive participatory and rights-based approaches and support evidence-based decision making and accountability and will build on capacity for ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Our Ministry would like to assure this House, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we are putting in mechanisms in place to ensure transparency, accountability and good governance is maintained and also the secretariat team will be well supported, as I have shared, that we have engaged technical advisors to provide the needed support. We hope that in the next audits, we will be able to see a reflection of that.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I was very carefully listening to honourable Maharaj and I wish he was giving the same speech when he was in the Opposition. I

think everything he said is correct. In fact, he mentioned the culture of ignoring timely reporting, the culture of delays and backlog, poor quality of financial statements and weak internal controls. These are all trends, a culture that has set in for a long while.

I must admit, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we still have some elements of that culture still being practised. I remember chairing the Public Accounts Committee for a brief period and when I presented my first report, I did not realise that that would be the last report because the Government did not like the report that we presented.

However, having said that, Madam Deputy Speaker, honourable Maharaj is correct. In 2017, the then Minister for Economy actually changed the financial regulations further and ...

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Yes, your former boss.

... independent bodies, independent commissions got a life of their own.

He changed the regulations and Independent Commissions got a life of their own. When we do the budget, it is a one-line budget for Independent Bodies and Commissions. Some of them are very good, some of them have taken a life of their own. They have kind of weaponised themselves and find that any attempt, even at that time, you will remember, attempt by the Auditor-General to go and audit certain independent institutions and ministries, they were having difficulties.

So we, honourable Maharaj and for the information of the Opposition, and I think all of you know this very well, one of the first tasks that we undertook was to review the Audit Act, and we have now provided extra independent powers to the Office of the Auditor-General and the Auditor-General so that some of those activities, backlogs, delays and the continuous disregard of the Financial Management Act and financial regulations can be dealt with more independently by the Office of the Auditor General.

However, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me also say that we have to further look at the financial regulations, the Financial Management Act and the way in which Independent Bodies and Commissions, and I can see that there is an issue with respect to the Elections Office, and there are others that have similar issues in terms of following up.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is very important, and we have done that, is to properly resource the Office of the Auditor-General. We have a great person, the first female in the history of this country, who was appointed as Auditor-General, and she is a very qualified, accomplished Auditor-General. We are very confident that going forward, the Auditor-General's Office will ensure that there are no delays in submission of the reports.

An important point that everyone made, the honourable Kamikamica as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and all the others who spoke made that point. If you cannot bring your annual report and financial accounts on time, then you must not feel free that you will not be sanctioned by the authorities. Because if you do not get the financial reports and annual reports on time, there is no way for us as Members of Parliament, as Ministers, as people who are interested in the financial management can actually know exactly what should happen.

We are as a government, emphasising that and working towards making sure that all the entities produce their annual reports and financial statements on time.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- I will spend some time on that when you ask me a question, because this is the lies that people like you, when you go out drinking grog in Lautoka, this is what you go and tell. So, do not joke about that.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, firstly, may I thank all the contributors to this debate and thank them for their constructive observations and suggestions.

I thought that it might be appropriate, I know that we somewhat singled out the iTaukei Affairs, but I think it is important to note that there are 12 other entities that have similar issues in this Report. So, it is not just unique to iTaukei Affairs.

The second point that I thought I would make, which is quite important, is that within the Report, there are entities that are actually complying with the standards and requirements of the Financial Management Act and the other legislation. I thought I would just read them out for the record to acknowledge them. These are Accident Compensation Commission of Fiji, Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji, Consumer Council of Fiji, Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission, National Sports Commission, Fiji Revenue and Customs Service, Fiji Teachers Registration Authority and Investment Fiji.

Having said that, Madam Deputy Speaker, certainly it is clear that there is a new leadership in the country. A leadership that believes in accountability and fiscal responsibility and is starting to fix the outstanding reports that have been around for some time Again, I would like to acknowledge, particularly the leadership of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and the Members who have worked together to bring things up to-date.

The honourable Prime Minister earlier today asked, whether we would ever get up to-date, and as far as I am aware, there is commitment by the Auditor-General, together working with the Public Accounts Committee, to really fix these accounts once and for all, ensure that everything is received in timely manner so that we can properly account for the resources that are given graciously by the people of Fiji.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also would like to assure the House that attached to this Report, are outstanding action items that need to be addressed, and the Public Accounts Committee will be actively involved in actually chasing these down, because it is not acceptable to have things outstanding this long and they need to be fixed.

Finally, as a message to everyone out there, every single Statutory Authority, Independent Commission and Bodies, I would like to just say that if you are using public funds, be sure that you account for it properly and responsibly. Madam Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Public Accounts Committee, the former Chairman, I would like to thank everyone for the debates, and I commend the Report to the House.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote to note the content of the Report.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

REVIEW REPORT ON THE 2022 GENERAL ELECTION JOINT REPORT BY THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION AND SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

HON. RATU. R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I move:

That Parliament debates the Review Report on the 2022 General Election Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections which was tabled on 6th November, 2025.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I second the motion.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- As the Member moving the motion, I rise to make a short contribution on the 2022 General Elections Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections. The 2022 General Election Report compiled by the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections was mandated by section 14(g) of the Electoral Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Committee thoroughly reviewed the Report and identified several pertinent issues that may warrant the consideration of the House. Most of these issues were addressed and clarified by the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office. Some of the key findings noted by the Committee are as follows:

- (1) That the 20 recommendations by the Multi-Observer Group and the additional recommendations noted in the Report have been reviewed and refined by the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office, and subsequently submitted to the Fiji Law Reform Commission, as part of its proposed changes to the electoral laws.
- (2) That the Fiji Law Reform Commission has subsequently reviewed all recommendations by the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office, and the outcome of these changes will be presented in this Parliament in the not too distant future.
- (3) That there are concerns regarding the declaration document, published by the Fijian Elections Office that could potentially be weaponised by a political party that wins an election.
- (4) A suggestion is being made to remove sealing cap for political party donations, which could infringe the independence of the party that wins an election.
- (5) In terms of the recommendations in the Report by the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Standing Committee review and propose changes to electoral laws that are proposed by the Fiji Law Reform Commission once the Report is tabled in Parliament.
- (6) The safeguards be implemented to protect those donors listed in the declaration document published by the Fijian Elections Office, which could be weaponised by any winning party.
- (7) That there be an early date allocated for public disclosure of election dates, to allow sufficient preparation time for voters and stakeholders.
- (8) Given the repeal of the MIDA Act, it is recommended that there be a suitable replacement framework to be considered by FEO to ensure continued media accountability, transparency and fair access during elections.

With those few words, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity and I commend the Report to the House for debate.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. Each speaker will speak for up to five minutes and I have a list of seven speakers before the right of reply from the honourable Chairman.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to make contributions to the debate on the Review Report on the 2022 General Election Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections, which was tabled on 6th November, 2025. The Standing Committee has already carried out its review and has come up with four main recommendations. I will be addressing Recommendation Nos. 2, 3 and 4.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on Recommendation No. 2, the Committee had reservation on the declaration document published by the Fijian Elections Office, as it could be weaponised by a political party following an electoral victory. It is recommended that safeguards be introduced to prevent misuse and ensure the document serves its intended purpose of transparency and accountability. The financial disclosures required to be published in the media under the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013, are as follows:

- (a) Declaration of Assets and Liabilities incurred and income and expenditure of newly Registered Political Party – section 16(2) of the Act.
- (b) Statement of Assets and Liabilities for Political Parties Before and After a General Election – section 25(1)(a) of the Act.
- (c) Audited Accounts of Political Parties to be published on the Fijian Elections Office Website – section 26(1) of the Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as for the Declaration of Assets, Liabilities, Income and Expenditure of Candidates for a General Election and applicants, officeholders and registered officers of political parties, the Act was amended in 2021, removing the publication requirements in the media. The amended Act substituted this with an inspection process, where members of the public can inspect such documents at the Fijian Elections Office. The rationale for publication and inspection of this document is more to allow voters, either through their own examination or through media reporting, to access the standing of the political party of their choice and their representatives. Though this is essential for transparency and accountability purpose, it is also prudent to ensure that safeguards be introduced to ensure the documents serve their intended purpose and not to be weaponised.

On Recommendation No. 3, the Committee supports the Election Commission's position on advanced public disclosure of election dates and recommends that such dates be announced early to ensure adequate preparation, time for voters and stakeholders. The early announcement of the date of election is considered best practice for the following reasons:

- (1) It will greatly assist the Electoral Commission and the FEO in their operational planning and will reduce operational and administrative costs.
- (2) The early announcement can contribute to increased voter turnout as it will allow voters to organise themselves around the proposed election date.
- (3) It would be of benefit to our Fijian diaspora as once the election date is announced, the postal applications open. This gives them ample time to apply for their postal ballot and gives enough time to the FEO to dispatch the postal ballots to the postal voters.
- (4) It ensures fairness or a level playing field for political parties and candidates participating in the election, with all of them knowing the date of the election, and they have all equal time to prepare for election, unlike the last general elections.

The above are just a few of the reasons why early announcements of the dates of elections are important. Therefore, I support this recommendation made by the Committee.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Listen honourable Members!

On Recommendation No. 4, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Committee acknowledged MOG's observation that the media in Fiji generally enable parties, candidates and others to represent their messages to voters, and that has played a role in informing voter choice. However, the Committee recommends that a suitable replacement framework be considered by FEO. The media plays a very essential role in the democratic process.

The Coalition Government was instrumental in the move to repeal the Media Industry Development Authority Act 2010, which was successfully repealed by a majority vote by the Fijian Parliament on 6th April, 2023. The repeal was crucial to ensure that the media could operate freely without restrictions, just like in any democracy. I agree with the recommendation that a suitable replacement framework be in place to ensure that the media continues to operate freely and is allowed full coverage during the election. There should be no media blackout, and the media should be allowed access to view every electoral process and report freely and fairly, unlike the last general election.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I agree with the recommendation, and I fully support the motion before the House.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Madam Deputy Speaker, that was slightly amusing and a bit nauseating to listen to. People that were on this side of the House then talking about what happened. That is what they say, "chameleons change colour."

One of the things I would like to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that it is very good that we have this Multi-Observer Group (MOG). I think the recommendations that they have made have been very useful, and the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office have had a good look at them. One of the reasons that we decided not to go further into it because the Fijian Law Reform Commission has already gone into those particular aspects, and I think eventually they will come up, as the Chairman has pointed out. We here would rather wait for that to come out and then discuss those particular issues.

There are just a few things that are in the findings, I will not go to the recommendations, that I would like to talk about, Madam Deputy Speaker. One of the issues that I noticed that when they were coming up with their formulations of what to recommend on the amendments to the law, they looked at the report of MOG and then they also consulted political parties, CSOs and media organisations. They did consult political parties, but did not consult other representatives of the people who are not members of the party, and that is the lot of us who are here.

In terms of you representing the people that voted, the people who were Independent MPs were not consulted. I think this is something we have to look at in the future when you are looking at electoral laws, people that are in the parties are representing voters, but they are also independent MPs here who were not consulted in that process. I think that is something that we need to look at. Perhaps it is because the way our laws are structured, it was designed so that people would always be part of parties. So, I think that is an issue that will need to be addressed.

One of the things that has been talked about here is the possibility of the declarations being weaponised. People come into power, look at who supported that party, and then have a go at them; none of us wants that. I believe that one of the other things that is related to that, that is quite disconcerting is the fact that if you read the report, there seems to be a move away from setting ceilings on the amount that people can donate to political parties.

In the recommendations, I think the seventh of finding that we have, they are saying there should be tighter disclosure for large donations. We do not want to come to a state in our country where someone can donate \$10 million with no ceiling, and it influences the impact of the election itself. I will give an example, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the United States of America, one person threw \$270 million into the election. It had a profound effect and gave him power to some degree of a government. We never want that to happen in our country.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. J. USAMATE.- I think that is again the cheering squad, the very vocal cheering squad for the Government.

The other thing that I liked about the Report, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that it proposes a stronger focus on getting a gender diversity and a stronger focus on women getting into Parliament. Madam Deputy Speaker, in fact, the Fijian Elections Office had sort of putting in a recommendation that 30 percent of people on all party lists should be female. I think that sort of development, that focus on getting more women involved in Parliament, in representation will be something that is very good for us.

The one thing I do not really like, Madam Deputy Speaker, FEO is now looking to get rid of the app because there are some inaccuracies in it. However, as I think about it, the problem with the app, they talk about this glitch or whatever, was that the process that they used to put information on the app was not good enough to make sure that the right information went on the app. If that is the problem, you do not drop the app, you fix the process, so that the right information comes out. So, when you remove this app, whatever it is, people are guided by instant information that is correct the first time. So, the problem is your process of getting information into the app has weaknesses. What should the answer be? Fix these processes. So, I think they dropped the ball here in trying to attack the wrong problem.

There are a few things that I want to talk about, but I want to thank the Electoral Commission, the SEO's office, the staff of the SEO, and I thank the chairman of the EC. I mean, within a very short space of time he made time to come and meet the Standing Committee, and we had the benefit of listening to his wisdom, and I appreciate all the work that was done by the people at the Election Office.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I just like to make a short contribution to the motion before the House.

First of all, I join my colleagues in support of the motion that is tabled before the House - the debate on the Review of the 2022 General Election Report by the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Election.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the Standing Committee for the comprehensive review done in a timely manner and the findings and the recommendations stated in the Report. I would like to talk on two issues, but before that, I would just like to state that it is very important to note that this Report gives an analysis of the conduct of the General Election in 2022, a result of which we, the

representatives of the people, are seated in this august House to gain our seats.

Madam Deputy Speaker, during the conduct of the 2014, 2018 and 2022 Elections, we were always advocating that it is important that the environment of elections should be conducted in a free and fair manner. Integrity of an election is at the heart of any democratic process. If an election is conducted in a non-inclusive way, it leads to loss of confidence of the results, which can lead to unnecessary frustration and civil disobedience at most. Irrespective of who is in government leading to an election, the principles will remain the same. Credible election that captures the will of the people goes a long way to establishing trust and unity for a nation and its people. Therefore, it is important to conduct a free, fair election, and credible election - first and foremost feature of a credible election is that it must reflect the will of the people.

As stated in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and I quote: “the will of the people shall be the basis of authority of government; this shall be expressed in a periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by a secret vote and by equivalent pre-voting procedures.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, allow me to quickly and briefly highlight some of the issues that has plagued our elections which the Standing Committee has also touched on in the Report. If we have close to 30,000 voting citizens that were turned away from pre-polling, say in the previous Elections of 2018 and 2022, that is a massive number of voters who were not given their right to elect a government of their choice, and thus robbed of their fundamental constitutional rights.

The pinnacle of the reasons given for these blunders was the process that was in place. Turning up of voters at wrong polling venues because of wrong information, misinformation, and lack of awareness. People were expected to check their polling venues on their mobile phones as we all are aware. Connectivity is an issue given there are over 1,500 election venues. This is a huge task for voters to do, and as I said, network connectivity for those in rural areas becomes an even bigger challenge.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one that automatically disadvantaged those living in rural remote locations where internet connectivity was very highly unreliable or non-existent. I wish to reiterate that many of us have been here in this august House since the last three Elections held under the current polling system. We had been calling for polling stations to be open to voters, to vote from any polling station closest to them, as long as they produce their Voter Identification (ID) cards. The voting system is supposed to be people-friendly and not draconian.

Furthermore, the 24-hour blackout period created further confusion to our voters because they were unable to determine last-minute queries they wanted to clarify. For instance, having numbers only in ballot boxes and no names or party symbols, which meant people had to cram the numbers of candidates they wished to vote for, or wrote them down somewhere. This particular challenge was voiced consistently by senior citizens who struggled to remember the numbers once they got inside the voting booths.

We also had restrictions for political parties to be involved in getting people to come to vote. No wonder, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have a high number of voters who did not vote and those who simply gave up on the exercise.

I think time is catching up on me, Madam Deputy Speaker, the second one is the major global benchmark for credible election is the acceptable voter turnout. In the 2022 election report, out of the 693,000 registered voters, which included 606 voters registered to vote on election day, and 77,000 for pre-election, a big number of voters registered in the general election did not come to vote. Only

473,910. So, that indication, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a sign of the very poor voter turnout, with over 30 percent that did not come to vote during the day and failed to exercise their duty to vote.

Madam Deputy Speaker, lastly, in terms of the app, we hope that there will be a reconsideration in terms of the app availability, so that it can allow for clarity of information.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ. - Madam Deputy Speaker, the review report of the 2022 General Election joint report highlights urgent reforms needed to address certain issues.

First of all, as per the law, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Report should have been tabled in Parliament within six months after the general election. Can someone explain why it took so long for the Report to be tabled in Parliament? During the *Straight Talk* with Vijay Narayan, Supervisor of Elections, is on record and was quite clear that the delay was from the Attorney General's (AG) office. So why was AG sitting with the Report for months when the elections office is an independent office? Why is the effective arm of the Government interfering with an independent office?

I thank the current Supervisor of Elections (SOE) for the Report, and while discussing this I should acknowledge the work of the former supervisor of election Mohammad Saneem under whose leadership we had three successful free and fair elections in Fiji.

One of the most significant issues that was raised, was the glitch which we heard a lot about, and this Government was all over the place talking about the investigation, but where is the report? What happened to the investigation? The problem is, that this Government loves to jump the gun and later realise they were so wrong - just to name a few, the glitch, bizFiji, Walesi, FRA, FICAC, Grace Road, PWD, Waqavuka, the national debt and so forth. The list continues.

There were a lot of talks about how the election was rigged. Now it is your turn, you are in Government, bring the evidence to the Parliament. How was it rigged? I have not seen, or heard the former Supervisor of Election being charged with regards to the glitch, or anything to do with rigging of the general election. So, that means he did his job with honesty and with all fairness. It is sad that we have lost a person of his calibre from the Fiji Elections Office (FEO).

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ. - Having said that, I wish to acknowledge the immense task before the new SOE as we come near to the 2026 General Election, and I send my well wishes to the Supervisor of Elections and her team at the Fiji Elections Office to conduct a free and fair 2026 general elections.

At least, before speculating about elections being rigged, someone should have used common sense that if the election was rigged, then why did the FijiFirst Party only get 46 percent of the total votes compared to 58.02 percent in 2018, and 62 percent in 2014 general election. Who rigged the general election to lose, Madam Deputy Speaker? That should have been the logical question to ask.

The review identified a major decline in turnout which fell from 84 percent in 2014 to 68 percent in 2022. This primarily linked to the systematic failure and undermine voter confidence. The Report noted that discrepancies in voter registration database led to the eligible voters being turned away at polling stations. Furthermore, voter education was found to be inadequate, particularly in reaching young voters who were often unable to vote due to an outdated residential address.

Recommendations included to review to simplify the Electoral Act 2014 for public readability, and to align with the international best practices and restore confidence in the general

public. The Standing Committee recommended establishing a suitable replacement framework for the media accountability following the repeal of the Media Industry Development Act (MIDA) and ensuring earlier public disclosure of election dates for better preparation by voters and stakeholders.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to reverse the trend of declining participation, the Supervisor of Elections must implement a targeted strategy focused on rebuilding trust and ensuring operational reliability. Since the provisional app was discontinued, the Supervisor of Elections must enhance the transparency on the manual count and media centre reporting process. This includes ensuring all party scrutineers receive immediate, verifiable data that matches any publicly released provisional tally, thereby eliminating the suspicion caused by the 2022 glitch, which was technical in nature and not intentional.

Removing the app will have far reaching impacts on transparency of the election process. Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections should consider the removal of the app once again. The Fiji Election's Office must dedicate significant resources to cleaning and verifying the National Register of Voters to eliminate database discrepancy and different size of voters. This is a crucial for building trust in the fundamental fairness of the process.

I believe the Fijian Election's Office should do a new voter registration, starting from scratch and to develop a national register for voters. The Supervisor of Elections must launch a renewed, data driven voter education campaign using accessible channels to target youths. This campaign should focus on simplifying key processes, especially voter registration and residential address updates, to ensure all eligible citizens, particularly with tertiary students, can cast their vote, even if it means taking the polling station to tertiary institutes as a pre-polling station.

The Fijian Elections Office should commit to implementing the recommendation to simplify electoral laws and to moderate the Supervisor of Elections powers. Clearly communicating these reforms will demonstrate a commitment to checks and balances, improving institutional credibility and encouraging broader participation.

To conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker, with these words, it would be interesting to see, after the public consultation what changes are brought to the Electoral Act and how many recommendations of the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) Report was implemented. The recent interview by Mr. Wadan Narsey has caused havoc environment in Fiji, and I asked the honourable Prime Minister to incorporate in the terms of reference in the future, that whenever a committee is appointed, they are to work within the ambit of the terms of reference, report back to the relevant authority and not to do running commentary. To conclude, I thank the Standing Committee for the Report, and I support the Report.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the Standing Committee for this very important Report. Let me just begin by reflecting on my time in the Opposition and my experience in the last three elections, to make the point that essentially, the Report recommendations allude to.

When we talk about free and fair elections, and I know honourable Members on the other side would recall, when we were in Opposition, we did talk about laws that could be weaponised in the wrong hands at the wrong time. I described some of the electoral law provisions which continuously got changed as stupid laws.

And I think this Report makes a lot of sense, and if we do not change those, they will remain stupid laws. They will remain weaponised, and they would not make any election free and fair. When you talk about free and fair elections, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is not just about free and fair. It is

about electoral integrity, and I remember the laws at the moment required that Multinational Observer Groups had to adhere to the terms of reference agreed to by the government. So, Commonwealth Observer Groups, the European Union Observer Groups, could not come here. Instead, a more regional observer group was covered up, because they agreed to the terms of reference by the Government at the time.

So essentially, free and fair election is one thing, but electoral integrity is another. So, we need to look at that. When you look at the campaign laws, for example, the new requirement just before the last election, the law was changed, required this costing of campaign manifestos. And again, those are laws that could be weaponised if you are in Government, you can always look at what the Opposition has put forward. You can find one little aspect of the manifesto not costed properly - you could end up in jail, you could be fined, and your political party could be ruled out of the election.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think a lot of the speakers have already talked about various aspects of the electoral law, various aspects of the Political Parties Act. These are draconian laws, and they do not exist in real democracies. Therefore, we need to, and I think the Report quite rightly points out, that we need to change those provisions. Elections are supposed to be celebrated. People must feel free to participate. People must feel the festivity about an election, and we used to have that. People did not mind doing that, enjoying the prospects of participating, making their views known, voting for whoever they wanted to vote.

However, with the laws that we had for the last three elections, you make one slip, you end up at a wrong polling shed, and you mistakenly say to somebody, "hey, go and vote for me," you could be charged for a criminal offence, and you could end up in the court, and your votes could be nullified. I mean, there was a case in 2018, honourable Joseph Nand would remember that. If that case had gone forward in 2018, and if honourable Joseph Nand was singled out, he could have faced a criminal charge of going into a polling shed in Sigatoka and working with people. He may have been quite innocently taking the people and saying, you know, you can go and vote here.

Those are the absurdities of some of the provisions both in the Electoral Act and in the Political Parties Act, and I think the Report has quite fairly identified all those pitfalls, and I think it is important that we change this before we go into the next election. So, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Standing Committee for a good job and the recommendations that they have made.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. First of all, let me thank the Standing Committee on a job well done with respect to coming up with this particular Report, and the necessary recommendations. Also, I want to thank the previous speakers, and I think everybody has an opinion on all of this, but I think we also need to realise that historically speaking, we have only put ourselves in this position, whether it is from five years ago, 10 years ago, 30 years ago, whatever it is.

We are a country that has had four Constitutions in the last since independence. We have had many changes in the mindset of all Fijians. We have had a different playing field with respect to every single election that has happened. So, there will be things that you do not agree to, we do not agree to, et cetera, all that kind of stuff, but what is most important is that whenever we do have elections, we must respect each other's opinions.

A lot of the stuff that honourable Professor Prasad has spoken about, a lot of the laws came about because of previous behaviour, because of what had actually transpired previously. Of course, there is a review that can take place, there are changes that need to take place but this particular Report, might I remind everyone, is a combined Report of the Electoral Commission and the Fijian

Elections Office. To be honest, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is nothing in here that is adverse. As a matter of fact, more adverse stuff has come out with respect to the Electoral Reform Commission. I am glad that the honourable Acting Attorney-General has jumped on the issue of someone making comments prior to even Cabinet approval. These are the things.

When you see that we put people in places of trust, something needs to be done about it when they act outside of the authority and the ambit of the authority that they have done. To-date, we have not seen too much action with respect to what has transpired, but it takes away the impetus of the current Government or whichever government is in place.

(Honourable Member interjects)

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Carry on, honourable Koya.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Thank you. I think this is the problem - they do not listen, and I am not speaking garbage either, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The point here is that the Standing Committee has come up with some fairly good recommendations. Everyone should listen to it. The Multinational Observer Group issue, raised by the honourable Professor Prasad, yes, it is important. However, they also have come up with a report that does not give you any adverse findings with respect to the elections that have taken place.

I want to repeat the words that honourable Kamikamica said just a little while ago, “give credit where it is due.” Let us give credit to the previous Supervisor of Elections, let us give credit to the previous Electoral Commission and the Electoral Commission that is there now that has a tremendous job to do.

I must commend similar sentiments expressed by honourable Usamate. I must commend the Chair of the Electoral Commission. He is a wonderful and a very learned person. I think he is actually guiding this particular period at the moment where we are going to come up to elections a little later in a good manner. He took out his time to actually address the Standing Committee and he did answer all the questions that we needed to, and the current Acting Supervisor of Elections was very forthright with respect to her submissions.

We obviously had some reservations on the declaration issue, I think everyone has spoken about it and the Electoral Commission's position on public disclosure of election dates, et cetera. These are important things. Some of the recommendations that have come up by the Electoral Commission and the Fijian Elections Office has come through the Multinational Observer Group report. They have combined themselves to come up with some good recommendations for it.

Bearing all of that in mind, we must also look at our own landscape, which, with respect to elections and political parties, seems to change every election. It does, but we must be fair, because at the end of the day, we sit here, we get paid well, we represent every single citizen in this country. When we stand up here, we must be true to ourselves at the end of the day as true Fijians representing the 600-thousand-something-odd voters.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to address the voter apathy issue, as a matter of fact, when the numbers were crunched, and this is something coming out of the elections office, we have not fared too badly in terms of comparison to some of the other countries. Although it has fallen from 60 percent down to a little less, but we still have not fared too badly in terms of participation. We still need to educate our younger people. Now that the election might come up soon, we are looking at a young population - I think it is close to 40 percent, if I am correct, which is under the age of 40 years,

and we need to inculcate some good behaviour so that we can get good participation in the election and have true representation in this particular House.

I think phenomenal recommendations are in there, and I completely agree with the Report, and I support the Report before the House.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Review Report of the 2022 General Election, Joint Report by the Electoral Commission and Supervisor of Elections, which was tabled on 6th November. First of all, I acknowledge the contribution of all my colleagues from the other side, and from this side. Yes, there are so much to share, on how we can improve the system.

However, the bottom line, Madam Deputy Speaker, is this, we want an election that is fair, we want an election that is fun, we want an election to run without any complaints. That is precisely why we are looking at the Report and the recommendations. I am grateful and appreciative of the work done by the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights on the recommendations, on how we can improve the election next year.

As the Minister for Justice and the Minister responsible for Elections, I acknowledge the work done by the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections in compiling this Report. The Committee, having deliberated the Report, have identified several recommendations. In the interest of time, I support all the recommendations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I undertake that the Coalition Government, through my Ministry and related State agencies like the Electoral Commission, will review the electoral laws to ensure transparency, inclusivity, fairness and good governance. Above all, integrity must be maintained.

I, as the Minister responsible strongly urge members of the public to register their votes and engage with the FEO for any clarification. That is what the FEO has been doing. I accompanied them in New Zealand. They also accompanied me to Solomon Islands. However, something that we intend to do, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it was obvious, is that those who were left out in the last election will register and vote this time around.

Once the Government agrees on the date of the election, which everyone is curious about, the writ of election will be issued by the President on the advice of the honourable Prime Minister. In the meantime, the Government is yet to make that decision. That is the reason we wrote to Professor Wadan Narsey on 18th November, expressing our concern that it had gone over. It was quite regrettable, to say the least, but he has acknowledged that he should not have done it.

In the meantime, let us not contemplate what is going to come. Let us wait for the Government to make that decision. I agree with the recommendation of the Standing Committee and support the recommendation of the Review Report. I commend the Report before the House.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Madam Deputy Speaker. I have no further comments rather than to thank the honourable Members for their contribution to the motion. Personally, we need to commend the work of the Chairman of the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections on the mammoth task that is before them in preparing the country for the next general election. As Parliament, we await the Electoral Law and amendments that may come into this House in the near future.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Parliament will now vote to note the content of the Report.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of the sitting today. Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 7.23 p.m.