

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

TUESDAY, 18TH AUGUST, 2026

[CORRECTED COPY]

C O N T E N T S

	<u>Pages</u>
Minutes	1645
Communications from the Speaker	1645
(1) Welcome	
(2) Decision of the Business Committee	
Ministerial Statements	1646-1664
(1) Development of Agarwood in Fiji – Hon. A.V.B.C. Bainivalu	
(2) Strengthening of iTaukei Rights and Institutions – Hon. S.D. Turaga	
(3) Update on the Litter (Amendment) Act 2026 and National Integrated Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy – Hon. L.D. Tabuya	
Questions	1665-1692
<u>Oral Questions</u>	
(1) Cessation of Welfare Insurance	(Q/No. 126/2026)
(2) Criteria for Projects in the Divisions	(Q/No. 127/2026)
(3) Registration/Recognition and Standard Framework	(Q/No. 128/2026)
(4) World Surf League Championship Tournament	(Q/No. 132/2026)
(5) Increase in CCTV Camera Installations	(Q/No. 135/2026)
(6) Revision of Nadi Town Planning Scheme	(Q/No. 136/2026)
(7) Coastal Protection Projects – Lau Group	(Q/No. 138/2026)
(8) Sustainable and Lower Emission Aviation Infrastructure	(Q/No. 140/2026)
(9) Effectiveness of Asset Declaration Regime	(Q/No. 141/2026)
(10) Update on Fiji Mahogany Certification Process	(Q/No. 142/2026)
<u>Written Questions</u>	
(1) Statistics on Constructed Road Humps	(Q/No. 143/2026)
(2) Freehold Land Buyback Scheme	(Q/No. 144/2026)
(3) Statistics on Financial Services Ombudsman Office	(Q/No. 145/2026)
(4) Information on Justices of the Peace	(Q/No. 146/2026)
(5) Teachers' Qualification and Salary	(Q/No. 147/2026)
(6) Voter Awareness and Registration Programmes	(Q/No. 148/2026)
(7) Statistics on Expired Medicine in Divisions	(Q/No. 149/2026)
(8) Ice Plants on Solar and Other Forms of Fuel	(Q/No. 150/2026)
(9) OPEX and CAPEX – Municipal Councils	(Q/No. 151/2026)
Presentation of Reports of Committees	1692-1695
(1) Report on the Commercial Use of Marine Areas Bill 2025 (Bill No. 42/25)	
(2) Report on the Pasifika Communities University Bill 2026 (Bill No. 09/26)	
(3) Report on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill 2025 (Bill No. 37/25)	

TUESDAY, 18th AUGUST, 2026

The Parliament met at 9.45 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present, except the honourable Minister for Education; the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services; the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport; the honourable Minister for iTaukei Affairs; the honourable Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports; honourable S.S. Kirpal; and honourable H. Chand.

MINUTES

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move:

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 17th August, 2026, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. S. TUBUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPEAKER

Welcome

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

Honourable Members, please, also join me in welcoming the Acting British High Commissioner, Mr. Steph Lysaght. Welcome to Parliament and thank you for joining us today.

I also understand that one of our beauty queens for the Hibiscus Festival is with us - Miss National Fire Authority, Temalesi Alutakua. Welcome and we wish you well.

Decision of the Business Committee

Honourable Members, you would have already noted the 17 Oral Questions and 9 Written Questions on today's Order Paper. In exercise of its powers under Standing Order 124(4)(c), the Business Committee had taken a decision on Thursday, 14th August, 2026, to consolidate Monday's and Tuesday's questions on Tuesday's Order Paper. In that regard, please, be advised that Standing Order 41(4) and Standing Order 42(1) are suspended only during Question Time today. I thank you for your indulgence, honourable Members.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

- (1) Minister for Fisheries and Forestry;
- (2) Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General; and
- (3) Minister for Information, Environment and Climate Change.

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

Development of Agarwood in Fiji

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Cabinet Ministers and Assistant Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen in the gallery; *ni sa yadra vinaka*.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, firstly, I would like to thank our mighty God for His continued guidance and protection, enabling us to be here this morning.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would also like to commend the Under 18 Team of Ra High School for historically qualifying for a spot in the Deans semifinal last Saturday. I would also like to congratulate the Under 19 Team of Navatu Secondary School on qualifying for the finals later this week. I wish all the qualifying teams that are preparing to play this Saturday in the Super Deans Fiji Secondary School Rugby Competition well.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise today to provide an update to this august House on the development of Agarwood in Fiji, an emerging forestry commodity that has generated considerable interest among our people. Of the many tree species of economic interest that we have in Fiji or have introduced into the country, Agarwood has arguably become one of the most talked about. This interest extends from our urban centres to rural communities, from our main islands to our maritime islands.

The Minister for Forestry is very much aware of this growing interest. We recognise the potential that Agarwood may offer to farmers, landowners, and the wider forestry sector. At the same time, we have a responsibility to ensure that its development is based on sound science, appropriate research, and reliable information. Today, I wish to update this august House on what we know about Agarwood, the work undertaken to date, and the Ministry's plan for its responsible and sustainable development in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Agarwood is produced by several tree species belonging to the genus *Aquilaria*. The genus is native to Southeast Asia and has subsequently been cultivated in other parts of the world, including Fiji. According to records from the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji, *Aquilaria* was first introduced to Fiji in 2010.

Three species have been introduced, *Aquilaria malaccensis*, *Aquilaria crassna*, and *Aquilaria filaria*. There are also reports suggesting that the species may have been introduced into Fiji earlier, although this has yet to be verified.

Agarwood itself is not simply the timber of an *Aquilaria* tree. It is a highly valuable fragrant

and resinous wood that develops when the tree is stressed or infected through a process known as inoculation. This involves intentionally wounding the tree and introducing a biological or chemical inducer to trigger the tree's natural defense response. In response to this stress, the tree produces a dark aromatic resin which gradually transforms part of the inner wood into Agarwood. Inoculation is generally carried out more than once, and trees are typically left for approximately two years to three and a half years after the final inoculation to allow the resin to develop and darken.

There is considerable interest in the international market for Agarwood. Current market information indicates values ranging from approximately USD500 per kilogramme for chips or raw wood to as much as USD100,000 per kilogramme or more, depending on sectors such as grain, grade, resin saturation, and whether the material is well harvested, plantation grown, or synthetic.

However, I wish to emphasise an important point in this august House, Mr. Speaker, Sir. At this stage, the Ministry of Forestry cannot confirm that Agarwood has been successfully produced in Fiji. What we can confirm is that *Aquilaria* trees have been grown in Fiji and that under the right conditions, these trees have the potential to produce Agarwood. This depends on a number of factors including the species planted, site conditions, tree age, health and, importantly, the inoculation method and timing. This distinction is important because we do not want to create unrealistic expectations amongst our farmers and landowners.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry's involvement in Agarwood research is not new. A decade ago in April 2015, the Ministry of Forestry established a small research plot at the Colo-i-Suva Station to monitor the growth and health of *Aquilaria* trees. Forty seedlings were planted, and their growth in response to different fertilizer mixes were monitored annually.

Although the lease on the land has since expired and the land has been returned to the *mataqali* (landowning unit), the experience gained from this initial research has provided a useful foundation for our current work. We are now building on that experience through collaboration with farmers, particularly in understanding the growing conditions required to produce Agarwood of the desired quantity and quality.

The first large-scale *Aquilaria* plantation in Fiji was established in Nasavusavu area in the District of Nalawa in Ra by World Forestry Limited, following the introduction of *Aquilaria* seedlings from Vietnam, with the intention of developing an Agarwood industry in Fiji. Over time, portions of the land leased and planted with *Aquilaria* have been returned to the respective *mataqali*.

In 2024, the Ministry of Forestry entered a collaborative partnership with *Mataqali Nacobicibici* of Nasavusavu, Nalawa in Ra, to undertake inoculation trials and agroforestry research on approximately 121.477 hectares of land already planted with *Aquilaria*. This partnership, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is an important example of how Government, landowners and farmers can work together to explore new opportunities, while ensuring that development is informed by research.

In February this year, Fiji held its first dedicated training on Agarwood. Two Agarwood specialists from Philippines conducted a five-day training at the Navuso Agriculture Training Centre, with more than 50 Agarwood growers participating. The training was organised by the Fiji Agarwood Growers Association with the support from the Ministry of Forestry and included practical training on inoculation using a biological inducer.

Following the training, the inoculation trials were undertaken on selected trees at Navuso in Naitasiri, Vusuya in Tailevu, and the Nasavusavu Agarwood plantation in Ra. These trees are currently being monitored by the Ministry's Research Division. A further round of inoculation was taken in May 2026 in Nasavusavu and Dravuwalu in Kadavu. These trials will be revisited after

approximately one year to assess whether there is evidence of Agarwood formation. Under our partnership with the *Mataqali Nacobicibici* of Nasavusavu, the Ministry has also undertaken the first inoculation of selected trees using the same biological inducer that was used during the Navuso training.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these trends that were undertaken are important because we need evidence from Fiji's own growing conditions before we can confidently recommend particular inoculation methods to farmers. There is no doubt that Agarwood has captured the imagination of many Fijians. It has been discussed widely in our villages, communities, around the kava bowl and this growing interest is reflected in the establishment of two associations representing people who are interested in Agarwood farming, the Fiji Agarwood Growers Association and *Aquilaria* Agroforestry Association Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is significant because it represents the first time that we have seen the establishment of two associations focussed directly on an emerging commodity with Fiji's forestry sector. The Ministry acknowledges the initiative taken by these associations and is closely working with them. The associations have also taken their own initiative to bring specialists from Asia to Fiji to support local farmers with knowledge and practical experience, with the assistance from the Government through the Ministry of Forestry. I commend their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the same time, our message to growers must be clear. Interest and potential alone do not constitute a proven industry. We must ensure that farmers are provided with accurate information so that they can make informed decisions about investing their land, time and resources.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as Agarwood cultivation expands in Fiji, the Ministry believes that our role is to provide leadership, research, technical guidance and appropriate regulation, rather than simply promoting the species with sufficient evidence. There is currently a misconception that simply planting an *Aquilaria* tree will result in Agarwood production - the reality is more complex. Without appropriate stress or inoculation, an *Aquilaria* tree may not produce the available resinous wood that is sought after in the market.

For that reason, the Ministry has been cautious about actively promoting *Aquilaria* as a commercial commodity while our research is still underway. Our immediate priority now is to determine the most viable biological or chemical inducer and inoculation method for Fiji, taking into account our local conditions, tree species, sites and growing environment. The Ministry will, therefore, continue its inoculation trials this year and over the coming years.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as part of this work, we also intend to undertake a stock take of existing *Aquilaria* farmers and plantations throughout Fiji. This will help us better understand the scale and distribution of the resource and provide a stronger basis for planning and research.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry will allocate funding in this new financial year and over the next five years towards the inoculation research and development of an Agarwood guideline for Fiji. This guideline will be important in providing farmers and landowners with practical and reliable information on the establishment, management, inoculation and potential development of *Aquilaria* plantations.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Agarwood presents an interesting potential opportunity for Fiji's forestry sector, particularly for farmers and landowners who are looking to diversify their income sources. However, we must proceed responsibly. We must not allow the excitement surrounding the high international value of Agarwood to create unrealistic expectations or expose our farmers to

unnecessary risk. Our approach must, therefore, be researched-based, farmer-centred, environmentally responsible and commercially realistic.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Minister for Forestry will continue to work closely with the Fiji Agarwood Growers Association, the Aquilaria Agroforestry Association, landowners, farmers, researchers and other relevant stakeholders. I encourage both associations and all members of the public involved in Agarwood cultivation to work closely with the Ministry. Together, we can build the evidence, knowledge and systems necessary to determine whether Agarwood can develop into a viable and sustainable forestry industry in Fiji.

If the research confirms its potential, then our responsibility will be to ensure that the industry develops in a manner that benefits our farmers and landowners, contributes to our economy, protects our environment, and is supported by appropriate technical standards and good forestry practices.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you and the honourable Members of this House for your indulgence.

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

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for her update on Agarwood development in Fiji. I understand that the updates have expanded on the collaboration between the Ministry and the growers' associations and the training and inoculation trial on selected Agarwood trees. She has itemised the Ministry's way forward and approach on the viability and sustainability of Agarwood in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the development of Agarwood was introduced, as she had alluded to, around 15 years ago and trials have been carried out. There has been a lot of interest in our rural areas and maritime islands. While there were three species initially introduced and is widely circulated around Fiji, inoculation is the most important exercise that is required to be carried out to produce Agarwood. The Opposition welcomes initiatives that create new income opportunities for our farmers, diversify our forestry sector, and increase export potential.

Agarwood has significant value in international markets, and we acknowledge the Ministry's efforts in working with the growers' associations, conducting training, and undertaking inoculation trials. However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, trainings are encouraging for our farmers and they need more certainty, the quality of planting material, technical support, affordable financing, secure markets and clear policies that give them confidence to invest in a crop that may take years before generating returns.

The honourable Minister has spoken about the way forward, but the people deserve measurable targets. How many hectares does Government intend to establish? How many farmers are expected to benefit? What resources have been allocated in the budget? What market agreements are already in place to ensure that farmers receive fair prices when their trees mature?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Agarwood should not be viewed in isolation. It must be part of a broader national forestry strategy that balances economic development with environmental sustainability, which brings me to an important concern. While Government speaks of new forestry opportunities, its overall record on climate action and carbon management remains disappointing.

Fiji has approximately 70,000 hectares of mahogany plantation, one of the largest tropical hardwood plantations in the world, yet it has failed to develop a comprehensive strategy to

quantify and monetise the enormous carbon sequential potentials of this forest. Around the world, countries are generating investment and climate finance through well-managed forest carbon programmes, but Fiji continues to lag behind.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, instead of relying solely on international climate leadership, Government should demonstrate that leadership here at home. We should have robust forest carbon accounting, stronger reforestation programmes, and policies that encourage indigenous forests and commercial plantations to contribute to our national emission reduction commitment. If managed properly, Fiji's forest sector can deliver three outcomes simultaneously - protecting diversity, creating sustainable livelihood for our rural communities and generating revenue through carbon markets.

The Opposition believes that Agarwood has genuine potential, but success will depend on proper planning, transparency, scientific research and long-term support for farmers. We urge Government to develop a comprehensive forestry roadmap that integrates Agarwood, mahogany, indigenous forests, sustainable harvesting, carbon sequestration, and climate finance into one coordinated national strategy. Only then will Fiji fully realise the value of its forests, not only as timber resources, but as vital assets in combating climate change and strengthening our economy.

MR. SPEAKER.- I thank honourable Koroilavesau for the Opposition's response. Just as a footnote, I have three Agarwood trees that are flourishing around my residence, honourable Minister. They were planted some years back by my brother-in-law from Bua. According to my brother-in-law, and I have no cause to doubt him, when they are ready, the total value will be more than my house. So, maybe, there are other options than planting *dalo*, I would say.

Strengthening of iTaukei Rights and Institutions

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Deputy Prime Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, those following the proceedings from home and abroad; the topic this morning is something that is closer to our heart and closer to the people of Fiji. I will be speaking on the strengthening of *iTaukei* rights and institutions, anchored in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a law may be written in a matter of days, debated in a matter of hours, and passed in a matter of minutes, but its consequences can be felt for generations. This is why when we speak about the laws that affect the *iTaukei* people, we are not simply talking about legislation - we are speaking about land, culture, identity and tradition. We are speaking about institutions that have carried the voice and the interests of *iTaukei* people and, ultimately, we are speaking about confidence –confidence that the law will listen to the people it governs, protect what is entrusted to them and provide a fair foundation for those who come after us.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise today to update this august House on a matter that touches the conscience of our nation. Between 2007 and 2022, close to 30 laws were introduced through proclamations, decrees, and subsequently, Acts of Parliament, affecting matters of significance to the *iTaukei* people. Of those, 26 laws have been specifically identified for review because they bear directly on the *iTaukei* land, resource, trust funds, and traditional institutions. Twenty-six laws may appear, at first glance, to be simply a number, but behind every one of those laws are people. Behind them are landowners, families, villages and institutions. Behind them are questions of land, identity, culture, tradition and representation. Behind them is something even more important, confidence in the law and in the institutions that make it and administer it.

The question before us, therefore, is not simply how many laws can be repealed, amended or replaced. The more important question is, how do we address the legitimate grievances of the past without creating new injustices for the future?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is the responsibility that this Government has undertaken. It requires us to acknowledge our history honestly, listen to the concerns of *iTaukei* people respectfully, and undertake reform with the care and constitutional discipline that matters of land, culture, identity, tradition, institutions and fundamental rights demand.

On historical context, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the laws that were introduced during the period from 2007 to 2022 reached into areas at the very heart of *iTaukei* life, including land, natural resources, trust funds, provincial and traditional institutions, and representation in this very Parliament. A number of these measures were introduced without the level of consultation that the *Vanua* expected and considered necessary. We should acknowledge that history but acknowledging history should not be about assigning blame for its own sake. It should be about understanding what happened, recognising the concerns that remain and ensuring that the lessons of that period inform the decisions we make today.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Supreme Court's opinion on 29th August, 2025, provides an important constitutional context for this discussion. The Court considered the circumstances surrounding the development of the 2013 Constitution, including the comparatively brief consultation process that preceded its adoption, following the setting aside of the Yash Ghai draft, which had emerged from a more extensive nationwide consultation process.

The significance of this history is not merely academic. The Constitution is the framework within which our institutions operate and through which the rights and responsibilities of our people are protected. When the process through which laws and constitutional arrangements are developed has left communities feeling unheard or excluded, Government has a responsibility to listen and consider what can be done to strengthen confidence in our democratic institutions. The grievances raised by chiefs, Provincial Councils, landowning units and members of the *Vanua* are real.

The Bose Levu Vakaturaga or the Great Council of Chiefs – a preeminent institution of *iTaukei* governance, was suspended in 2007, and its statutory foundation was subsequently removed by decree in 2012. The legislative framework governing the *iTaukei* Land Trust Board was amended by decree five times between 2009 and 2011. The dedicated communal representation that had provided for an *iTaukei* voice in this Parliament was abolished under the Electoral Decree of 2014. These matters are not simply historical footnotes. They continue to inform how many *iTaukei* view the relationship between their communities, their institutions and the State. This Government, therefore, believes that they must be addressed with honesty, respect, and responsibility.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the People's Coalition Government's approach to these matters is firmly anchored in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The Declaration recognises, among other things, the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination; to free, prior and informed consent in decisions affecting their land, their territories and resources; to maintain the nature of their own institutions; and to seek redress where appropriate for historical wrongs. For this Government, these principles are not simply words reserved for international forums – they provide an important standard against which we should consider our own laws and institutions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the implementation of these principles must take place within the constitutional and legal framework of Fiji. The task before Government is, therefore, not simply to remove legislation, but to ensure that the legal framework we establish is fair, workable, constitutionally sound and capable of serving our generations to come.

My Office has, therefore, applied these principles in reviewing the 26 laws identified from 2007 to 2022, as having a direct bearing on the *iTaukei* land, resources, trust funds and traditional institutions. Where appropriate, Government has already acted and where work remains, that work continues.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me set out clearly what has already been achieved. Since 2023, this Government has tabled 124 Bills, enacted 108 Acts of Parliament, representing an enactment rate approaching 87 percent. Of the 26 laws identified, nine have already been directly repealed, amended or superseded. These are not merely legislative statistics - they represent the concrete steps taken to review, and where necessary, change the legal framework inherited by this Government.

The Media Industry Development (Repeal) Act 2020 repealed, in its entirety, the decree that had restricted public reporting and debate on matters including *iTaukei* land, *qoliqoli*, and grievances concerning the Bose Levu Vakaturaga for well over a decade.

The *iTaukei* Land Trust (Amendment) Act 2023 and the *iTaukei* Affairs (Amendment) Act 2023 restored parliamentary ownership and oversight of the legislative frameworks governing the *iTaukei* Land Trust Board, the *iTaukei* Affairs Board and Provincial Administration.

The State Land (Amendment) Act 2023 revisited the State Land regime as it had operated following amendments made during the decree period in 2011 and 2013.

The Higher Salaries Commission Act 2023 re-established an institution that had been abolished by decree in 2011, restoring an independent mechanism in relation to senior public appointments.

The Local Government (Amendment) Act 2023 and the Local Government (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 2023 brought municipal governance, including matters affecting native land boundaries, back under appropriate parliamentary scrutiny.

The Forestry Act 2025 and the Mahogany Act 2026 replaced decree-era legislative regimes governing forestry and mahogany resources, much of which are now grown on *iTaukei* land, and restored legislative oversight over these important resources.

The Sugar Industry (Amendment) Act 2025 revisited the legislative framework affecting *iTaukei* landowners who lease land for sugarcane production.

The Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2025 has strengthened the regulatory framework surrounding customary *i qoliqoli*, an issue of longstanding importance to *iTaukei* communities. These measures demonstrate that the Government's approach is not one of simply making commitments, but there has already been tangible legislative action.

On reforms currently underway, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we recognise that the work is not complete. The Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill 2025 is presently before the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights. This Bill represents one of the most direct legislative responses to the concerns I have outlined today and seeks to provide a stronger legal framework for recognising and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples in Fiji.

The Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Expressions Bill is also progressing. The earlier draft has undergone further review and reconstruction, and the Ministry of *iTaukei* is currently providing its feedback on policy documents placed before it in April this year. This work is important because traditional knowledge and cultural expressions are not simply cultural artefacts - they represent knowledge, practices, identity and heritage passed from one generation to another. They, therefore, require a legal framework that provides appropriate recognition and protection.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, discussions are also actively underway between the Office of the Solicitor-General and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs concerning the future legal status of the Bose Levu Vakaturaga. This is an important undertaking. The question is not simply whether the issue should have a legal status, but we must also consider its composition, its functions, its relationship with other institutions of the State and its place within our constitutional framework. That requires careful consideration and genuine engagement with the *Vanua*.

On the constitutional reform process, I also wish to update this House on the work of the Constitutional Reform Commission. The Commission, established in the wake of the Supreme Court's opinion, completed its nationwide public consultations on 10th July this year, and is now finalising its report for submission to His Excellency the President on 31st August, 2026. This is a significant national process which provides the citizens of this country an opportunity to express their views on the Constitution and on the constitutional arrangements under which our country is governed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Sections 159 and 160 provide for a demanding process for constitutional amendment, including the required parliamentary majority and approval through a referendum. That threshold is important. It means that fundamental changes to our constitutional framework cannot be made simply because one Government has the numbers to do so - constitutional reform must be supported by broad and considered national consensus. The work of the Constitutional Reform Commission is, therefore, not a delay to reform, but is part of the process through which national consensus can be built.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I anticipate the reasonable question that Members of this House and members of the public may ask as to why there has been a delay in repealing these decrees. The answer is one of responsibility. These laws do not exist in isolation. They interact with land tenure, trust administration, licensing arrangements, commercial relationships, leases and other legal rights upon which individuals, families, landowning units, cooperatives and financial institutions have relied for many years.

A wholesale repeal without appropriate transitional agreements could create legal uncertainty. It could affect existing land arrangements, trust distributions, leases, licensing arrangements, and other rights and obligations that have developed under the existing law.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is important that we recognise who could ultimately bear the consequences of that uncertainty. It could be the very landowners, families and the communities whom these reforms are intended to protect. This Government will, therefore, not trade one injustice for another. We must correct what requires correction, but we must do so in a manner that protects the legitimate interests and avoids creating new legal difficulties.

There is another reason why we must proceed carefully. The very history we are seeking to address provides us with an important lesson. If legislation affecting the rights and interests of institutions of *iTaukei* was previously introduced without sufficient consultation, then it would be inconsistent for this Government to respond by imposing new reforms without meaningful or prior consultation. We must not repeat the process that contributed to the grievances we are now seeking to address.

That is why the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill 2025, the Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Expressions Bill and any future legislation concerning the Bose Levu Vakaturaga are being developed through an engagement with the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, landowning units and the *Vanua*. We are not simply seeking to change laws, but we are seeking to build confidence in the laws that are placed there.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to make a very clear point - deliberate does not mean delayed, and a careful process is not an inactive process. The Government legislative programme provides a clear pathway - from policy development to the Office of the Solicitor-General's vetting, to Ministry consultation, to the Standing Committee consideration and, ultimately, to Parliament. That process is underway -

- The Right of Indigenous Peoples Bill is before the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights.
- The Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Expressions Bill is undergoing active Ministry consultation.
- Work concerning the future legal status of Bose Levu Vakaturaga is progressing between the Solicitor General's Office and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs.
- The Constitutional Reform Commission is finalising its report for submission by the end of this month.

These are tangible milestones. They demonstrate that the reform programme is progressing.

Mr. Speaker Sir, there is sometimes an assumption that the speed at which legislation is passed is the best measure of a government's commitment to reform. I respectfully suggest that it is not. The better measure is whether –

- the reform is properly considered;
- the people affected have the opportunity to be heard;
- whether the resulting law is constitutionally sound;
- whether it can operate effectively in practice; and perhaps, most importantly,
- it will endure because legislation that is passed quickly but later creates uncertainty, division, or the need for future correction cannot necessarily be described as successful reform.

Our responsibility is not simply to respond to the grievances of today and to ensure that the decisions we make today do not become the grievances of tomorrow. This is particularly important when we are dealing with land, traditional institutions, cultural knowledge, natural resources and constitutional arrangements. These matters extend beyond Parliament and Government. They affect generations.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Government inherited a body of close to 30 laws, which were introduced between 2007 to 2022 that affected *iTaukei* people. We have three further areas of significant reform actively progressing on the:

- (1) Rights of Indigenous People's Bill 2025;
- (2) Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Expressions Bill; and
- (3) work concerning the future legal status of the Bose Levu Vakaturaga.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these are important steps. Legislative reform should not be measured simply by the number of Acts passed - it should be measured by whether those laws improve people's lives, strengthen confidence in our institutions and provide a fair, stable and enduring framework for future generations.

For the *iTaukei*, this means ensuring that their land, culture, traditional knowledge, institutions and their legitimate interests are properly recognised and protected within the legal framework of Fiji. For every Fijian, it means ensuring that our laws are developed through processes that are transparent, participatory, constitutional, and that respects the rights and dignity of all. The Government, therefore, remains committed to completing this work.

We will continue to engage meaningfully with the *Vanua*, and we will continue to work through the institutions of our democracy. We will continue to uphold the principles reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and we will continue to ensure that reform is undertaken carefully, lawfully and with the objective of delivering the outcomes that endure.

Mr. Speaker Sir, history gives us lessons. The responsibility of this Parliament is to learn from them. We cannot change the past; however, we can decide what we do with its lessons. We cannot choose consultation over imposition. We can choose inclusion over exclusion. We can choose lasting reform over temporary solutions, and we can choose to build laws and institutions that future generations can inherit with confidence. That is the responsibility before us, and that is the work that this Government is committed to completing. Thank you.

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

HON. J. USAMATE.- *Ni tiko saka na Turaga na Speaker, au tucake saka tiko me'u tauca e dua na vosa ena vuku ni vosa era sa mai vakaraitaka tiko na Vunilawa Vakatawa, ena vuku ni vei lawa eso era raica tiko me ratou na dikeva lesu tale na Matanitu, mai na yabaki 2007 ki na 2022. Au via vakaraitaka, vata kei iratou na vica keitou dabe tiko ena yasana 'qo, ni keitou tu doudou tu me keitou rawa ni talanoataka vakadodonu na vei lawa eso vata kei na ka era vakayacora na lawa oya vei keda na kawa iTaukei ena gauna ogo, mai na 2007 ki na 2022.*

Turaga na Speaker, au rawa ni kaya vakadodonu eke, mai na yabaki 2007 ki na 2022, e levu na veisau lelevu e vakayacora na Matanitu e veiliutaki tiko ena gauna oya, e vukea sara ga na noda bula na kawa iTaukei.

Au via vakaraitaka, na kena i matai 'qo, e dua na ka e dau bibi vei keda, tabu saka yani na Turaga na Speaker, na veika me baleta na noda qele. Ia, au via vakaraitaka vakadodonu vei keda, mai na 2007 ki na 2022, e sega ni dua na centimetre, se sega ni dua na acre, ni qele ni iTaukei e kau tani mai vei keda. E sega ni vaka na veika a yaco mai Denarau ena yabaki 1996, ni veisautaki na qele oya me kau tani vakadua mai vei ira na veiliutaki – na veiliutaki tiko ni Turaga na Paraiminisita o koya ka veiliutaki tiko nikau. Oya na land swap ka a vakayacori mai Denarau. E vaka talega kina na ka a caka mai Momi ena yabaki 2006.

Ena loma ni veiyavu ni vakavulewa era a bula tu i Viti e liu, era dau vakatara tu na qele me veisautaki. Na Yavu ni Vakavulewa ni 1970, Yavu ni Vakavulewa ni 1990, Yavu ni Vakavulewa ni 1997 - era vakatara na qele me kautani vei keda. Ia, na Yavu ni Vakavulewa ni 2013 e vakatabuya vakadua oya. Au sa vakaraitaka sara ga vakadodonu na veika e yaco e kea.

Ena loma ni Yavu ni Vakavulewa ni 2013, e tukuna tiko mada ga vakaoqo ni tiko na qele e rawa ni dau taura na Matanitu me yaga raraba vei keda. Na kena tukutukuni vakavavalagi, 'for public purpose'. Na vei Yavu ni Vakavulewa e liu e dau tukuni, "Na qele oqori e rawa ni suka lesu tale." Na Yavu ni Vakavulewa ni 2013 e tukuna; "Ena gauna esa vakayagataka oti kina na Matanitu na qele oya ena kena kerei kina, me suka lesu tale." E sega tale ni rawa ni suka lesu tale.

Au via vakaraitaka tikoga vakamatata vei keda ni ka e yaco ena noda qele, e sega ni yaco tiko ena loma ni kena kautani mai vei keda na kawa iTaukei na noda qele, e sega ni yaco tiko mai ena maliwa ni 2007ki na 2022 - e yaco taumada mai na 1996, ena gauna ni veiliutaki ni Soqosoqo Vakavulewa ni iTaukei (SVT) kei na gauna ni veiliutaki ni Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL). Oya me matata tiko vei keda na lewe i Viti.

Meda raica na veisau tale e mai yaco - e veisautaki na Native Land Trust Board me yacana na iTaukei Land Trust Board. Oya ena kena vakacerecerei na yacada na iTaukei. O keda eda sega ni kacivi keda tu ga me 'da 'native' - o keda eda iTaukei.

Na ka au via taroga vua na Turaga na Minisita, kevaka ena vinakati me veisautaki eso na lawa, me yavutaki ena dina kei na dodonu. Kakua ni buli tikoga eso na veitalanoa meda veivakarerei tu kina – me yavutaki tiko ena dina kei na dodonu. Au nuitaka na Turaga na Minisita ena rawa ni vakadeitaka ni veisau ena kauta mai, ena kauta mai na ka vinaka vei keda na iTaukei.

Ena gauna ni veiliutaki ogo mai na 2007 ki na 2022, e kau tani kina na noda veivakaduiduitaki vakawa tamata. Eda wiliki keda na lewe i Viti meda tamata vata kecega, me vaka ga nida a buli vata meda i tovo vata kei na Kalou, eda veiucui vata kei na Kalou o keda kece - kai Idia, kai Viti, evei tale, meda duavata ga na tamata.

Ena loma talega ni gauna ogo, Turaga na Sipika, ena gauna e buli kina na livaliva mai Monasavu, raica tu na Prime Minister ena gauna oya, solia tiko na livaliva o Monasavu, era boko tu na veivalevale ena veikorokoro e toka yasai Monasavu. Na veiliutaki oya, na vanua e sega ni rawa ni yaco kina na livaliva, e qai vakaciciva kina na livaliva me rarama na lomai Viti Levu. Ena gauna ogo, kevaka o lako i Nadarivatu, lako i Namosi, o lako i Navosa, sa waqa kece tu. Ogo na lawa e kau – me kau mai na livaliva me vakararamataki Viti.

[Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to respond to the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General's speech regarding the Government's consideration of reviewing certain legislation enacted between 2007 and 2022. I stand here today, together with my colleagues on this side of the House, to speak openly about some of these laws and the impact or effects that those laws have had on us, the iTaukei people, from 2007 to 2022.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can state categorically that from 2007 to 2022, there were many significant changes introduced by the Government of the day that greatly contributed to the wellbeing and interests of the iTaukei people. I wish to highlight one of these matters first.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, one issue that has always been of great importance to us is the matter of our land. However, I wish to state categorically that, from 2007 to 2022, not a single centimetre or acre of iTaukei land was taken away from us. This is in contrast to what took place at Denarau in 1996, when the land was exchanged and permanently taken away from its original owners under the Government led by the then Prime Minister, who is also the Prime Minister today. That was the land swap that took place at Denarau. The same can be said of what took place at Momi in 2006.

Under the Constitutions that previously governed Fiji, provisions allowed land to be transferred away from iTaukei ownership. The 1970 Constitution, 1990 Constitution and the 1997 Constitution all allowed for the transfer of iTaukei land away from us. However, the 2013 Constitution expressly prohibits this. I am stating plainly and unequivocally what took place in that regard.

Under the 2013 Constitution, it is expressly provided that the Government may acquire land where it is required for the benefit of the public, in other words, "for a public purpose". Under previous Constitutions, it was provided that such land could be returned. However, the 2013 Constitution goes further by providing that once the Government has finished using the land for the purpose for which it was acquired, the land must be returned to its original owners. It cannot simply be retained by the Government indefinitely - it must be returned.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to make it absolutely clear that what has occurred in relation to our land did not involve the taking away of iTaukei land from the iTaukei people during the period from 2007 to 2022. These matters arose much earlier, beginning in 1996, during the governments led by the Soqosoqo Vakavulewa ni iTaukei (SVT) and subsequently the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL). I want this to be clearly understood by the people of Fiji.

Let us also look at another significant change that took place — the Native Land Trust Board was renamed the iTaukei Land Trust Board. This was an important step in recognising and affirming our identity as iTaukei. We do not simply identify ourselves as “native”; we are iTaukei.

What I wish to ask the honourable Minister is that, if there is a need to amend any of the laws, such amendments must be based on truth and fairness. We should not continue creating narratives that cause fear and uncertainty among our people. Any proposed changes must be grounded in truth and justice. I trust that the honourable Minister can assure us that any changes introduced will be in the best interests of the iTaukei people and will bring positive outcomes for them.

During the period of governance from 2007 to 2022, racial discrimination was removed from our society. We came to recognise ourselves as citizens of Fiji, equal as human beings, created together in the image of God and sharing the same human dignity - whether Indo-Fijian, iTaukei, or from any other community, we are all human beings, and we should stand together as one people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, during this period also, another significant development was the generation of electricity from Monasavu. At that time, while Monasavu was supplying electricity, many of the villages in the areas surrounding Monasavu remained without electricity in their homes. The Government of the day took action to extend electricity to areas that could not otherwise be readily connected, so that the interior of Viti Levu could also benefit from this vital service. Today, if you travel to Nadarivatu, Namosi, or Navosa, you will see that the villages are now connected and have electricity. This is an example of the kind of policy and legislation that was introduced to extend electricity services and bring light to the people of Viti Levu.]

(Chorus of interjections)

MR. SPEAKER.- Order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- *Oqo meda raica tiko na ka e yaga vei keda. Na vanua era sega ni dau tu kina na waidroka, sa drodro vei ira na waidroka. E liu eda dau la'ki taki wai mai na toevu, ia qo sa lako mai na wai ka yaco sara yani ena loma ni noda veivale. Na gaunisala, na wavu, na veivanua kece oqo.*

E veisautaki mai na lawa me baleta na noda vuli. Ena gauna qo, sa noda i yau talei na free and compulsory education, Tertiary Education Loans Scheme, e dola na katuba ni veivakatorocaketaki vei keda kece na kawa iTaukei. E levu vei keda eda sa la'i vulica ka rawa ka mai kina.

[Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us consider the tangible benefits that have been brought to our communities. In areas where people previously had no reliable access to clean water, water is now available. In the past, our people had to walk to wells and other water sources to collect

water. Today, water is being supplied directly to our homes. We have also seen improvements in roads, bridges, and other essential infrastructure.

Changes were also made to legislation relating to education. Today, we have the benefit of free and compulsory education, as well as the Tertiary Education Loans Scheme. These initiatives have opened the doors of opportunity and development to all of us, including the iTaukei people. Many of our people have been able to pursue higher education and achieve success as a result.]

MR. SPEAKER.- Order, order!

HON. J. USAMATE.- *E wili talega kina eso era kodrokodro tiko i muri 'go.*

[This also includes those who are making noise at the back.]

(Laughter)

HON. J. USAMATE.- *Na taro e tiko; na cava e sagai me veisautaki? Kevaka sa dua na ka me veisautaki, me veisautaki me yaga. Ia, ni da veitalanoa, meda veitalanoa vakadodonu ena ka e yaco. Meda raica mada ga na qele.*

Ena loma ni gauna e taura tiko kina na Matanitu, dau soli tiko na lisi e 6 na pasede na UCV. Na Matanitu ena gauna oya, qai vakaikuritaka tale e 4 na pasede me yacova ni sa 10 na pasede — e toso cake ena 4 na pasede. Ena loma ni gauna e tosoi cake kina na UCV 'go, sa sivia e \$111 na milioni na i lavo e lako vei ira na i taukei ni qele. E wase vakatautaurvata na i lavo ni lisi. Na i lavo ni lisi vei ira na gone sa qai tubu mai, e maroroi na i lavo me yacova ni ra yabaki 18, me ra qai taura na nodra i lavo.

Neitou vakamamasu vei ira na lewe ni Palimedi ena gauna 'go: kakua ni da veivakarerei tikoga ena veika eso. Ke sa vinakati me veisautaki eso na lawa, meda veitalanoataka vakavinaka, me yavutaki ena dina, kua ni yavutaki ena veivakarerei walega. Keitou talega 'go keitou kawa iTaukei, sega ni dua vei keitou via vakalega na ka ni kawa iTaukei. Meda veitalanoa tiko vakadodonu.

Au vakavinavinaka ni sa tauyavutaki tale na GCC, ia, me vakacavari sara.

[The question before us is; “What is it that we are seeking to change?” If there is something that needs to be changed, then let us ensure that the change is made for the benefit of our people. However, when we discuss these matters, let us speak openly and honestly about what has actually taken place. Let us consider the issue of land.

During the period when the Government held leases over iTaukei land, rent was paid at 6 percent of the Unimproved Capital Value (UCV). The Government of the day introduced an additional 4 percent, increasing the payment to 10 percent — an increase of 4 percent. During the period in which the UCV rent was topped up, more than \$111 million was paid to iTaukei landowners. Rental payments were also distributed equitably, including payments set aside for children, with their funds held in trust until they reached the age of 18, when they could access their entitlements.

Our appeal to the Members of Parliament today is this: let us not continue to create fear and uncertainty among our people. If there is a need to amend any laws, let us discuss those changes carefully and openly, based on facts and truth, and not on fear or unfounded claims.

We, too, are iTaukei. None of us wants to undermine or harm the interests and wellbeing of the iTaukei people. Let us, therefore, discuss these matters openly and honestly.

I welcome the re-establishment of the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), and I believe that this process should be brought to its proper conclusion.]

(Laughter)

HON. J. USAMATE.- ... *Buli sara na kena lawa. Dua noqu vakamamasu vei keda: meda kakua ni vakapolititaki ira na noda Turaga, kua. Meda laivi ira tiko. Kemudou sara ga na tiko e yasana qori, dou vakapolitiki tiko. Era vakalolovirataka na Turaga kevaka e vaka oya.*

[Let us ensure that the necessary legislation is put in place. I have one appeal to all of us: let us not politicise our traditional leaders. Please, let us leave them out of politics. Those of you sitting on that side of the House should refrain from politicising our traditional leaders. To do so is to undermine and diminish the dignity and standing of our traditional leaders.]

MR. SPEAKER.- I hope you are wrapping up your speech.

HON. J. USAMATE.- *Au sa mai vakacava toka na noqu vosa, Turaga na Sipika. Au vakadeitaka ni tu na dodonu vua na Matanitu me veisautaka na lawa. Ia, ni sa veisautaka na lawa, me laurai talega na ka vinaka e yaco. Kua ni da veisautaka na ka e vinaka; da veisautaka ga na ka ca me vakaukauwataki, me vakavinakataki.*

O keda kece qo, noda itavi na qaravi ira na lewe i Viti. Kei keda na iTaukei, qaravi keda na iTaukei, na lewe i Viti taucoko, me rokovi duadua ga kina na Kalou.

[Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will conclude my remarks by saying that I acknowledge the right of the Government to amend legislation. However, whenever laws are amended, we must also consider the positive outcomes that have been achieved. Let us not change what is working well; rather, let us address what is not working, strengthen it, and make it better.

All of us have a responsibility to serve the people of Fiji. As iTaukei, we have a responsibility to serve our own people, while at the same time serving all the people of Fiji, so that in all that we do, God alone may be glorified.]

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, think we will suspend the proceedings for our morning break and Parliament will resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.35 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.15 a.m.

Update on the Litter (Amendment) Act 2026 and
National Integrated Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers and honourable Members of Parliament; good morning.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, today, I rise with a very simple message - Fiji cannot afford to become a throwaway society. Every bottle thrown from a car window, every plastic bag dropped on the roadside, every rubbish bag dumped beside a river, every piece of waste washed into the sea, it does not simply disappear. Waste does not disappear, it travels. It travels into our drains, our rivers, onto our beaches, into our ocean and, eventually, someone else pays the price. Our ratepayers pay, our taxpayers pay, our tourism industry pays, our marine environment pays and our children inherit the consequences. That is why our Government is taking stronger action, from \$40 to \$200.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Parliament enacted the Litter (Amendment) Act 2026 in April. Last week, Cabinet approved the regulations required to operationalise the new fixed penalty for littering. Subject to completion of the gazetted process from 1st September, 2026, the fixed penalty for littering will increase from \$40 to \$200. That is a five-fold increase.

If you litter, you pay, not because government wants your \$200, we would rather collect zero dollars in litter fines, but because zero dollars in fines would mean people are doing the right thing. The purpose is deterrence, the purpose is accountability and, ultimately, the purpose is to change behaviour.

For too long, littering has been treated as a small offence, but there is nothing small about thousands of pieces of rubbish accumulating across our country every single day. There is nothing small about blocked drains contributing to flooding. There is nothing small about plastic entering our rivers and oceans. There is certainly nothing small about taxpayers repeatedly paying to clean up rubbish that should never have been thrown in the first place. Yes, the fine may be \$200, but the real cost of littering to Fiji is much, much higher. A fine means nothing without enforcement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we do recognise something else, that the law without enforcement is just words on paper. The weakness of the old system was not only the \$40 fine, it was also the limited likelihood of offenders being caught, and that must change.

The Ministry is, therefore, strengthening the network of Litter Prevention officers, including officers from Municipal Councils, the Fiji Police Force and the Land Transport Authority. They will be trained in identifying offences, gathering evidence and properly issuing fixed penalty notices. We will measure enforcement.

We will track how many notices are issued, where offences are occurring and whether behaviour is changing. We do not want to simply assume that the law is working, we need to prove that it is working.

From 1st September, the people of Fiji should expect two things - a stronger penalty and a stronger enforcement presence. However, enforcement is only one part of the solution. The Government must also make it easier for Fijians to do the right thing which means, better collection,

more recycling, better infrastructure, greater public awareness, and ultimately, less waste being produced in the first place.

We cannot clean our way out of this, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Across Fiji, thousands of people volunteer for community cleanup. Our schools participate, our churches, our youth groups, businesses, civil society, Government Ministries, and I sincerely thank them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, last week, the Lagilagi Housing community did a cleanup in their community. It was mostly made of children and women and, perhaps, a couple of fathers. Sir, they did do a cleanup and as part of their cleanup acknowledgement, we installed solar lights for their community volleyball court.

In the House today, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to acknowledge a family that has come all the way from Belgium here on holiday. Here are Lionel and Marie DeWolf and their beautiful girls - Carol, Sophie and Emmeline, who are here in Parliament today. I want to acknowledge them, because they reached out before they left Belgium to look for a community service that they could give to Fiji.

We identified the need for these solar lights or these lighting up of communities, including the multipurpose court at Lagilagi Housing, as well as the Irish Crossing from Newtown to Valelevu, where it needs light, especially for the safety of children, women, the elderly and the general community. They have kindly donated those solar lights, and I just wanted to acknowledge them being here today.

Mr. Speaker, there is an uncomfortable truth we must confront. We cannot clean our way out of Fiji's waste problem - we will clean a beach today; we will clean up the whole of Nasese today. However, there will be rubbish dumped again tomorrow. We will clear the drain this week and then we will fill it again with plastic next week. The cleanest country is not the country that cleans up the most - it is the country that litters the least.

That is the change we are pursuing and we approved last month Fiji's National Integrated Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy 2026-2035, which gives Fiji a national roadmap for the next decade because waste management is no longer simply about collecting rubbish and taking it to a landfill - it is now a public health issue, a climate resilience issue, a food security issue, a tourism issue, and it is about our ocean. And, increasingly, it is about our economy.

For a Small Island Developing State like Fiji, this challenge is particularly serious. We have limited land, we have hundreds of islands, and waste collection across maritime and rural communities is expensive. We import large quantities of packaged goods.

Tourism increases waste generation because we are islands. Rubbish dumped on land, very quickly finds its way into waterways and eventually into the ocean. There are Small Island States today where waste disposal sites have grown into enormous artificial islands of rubbish. That should be a warning to all of us. Fiji must act before our waste problem becomes our waste crisis. From a throwaway economy to a circular economy, the strategy, therefore, embraces the principles of a circular economy. The old model is simple - take, make, use, throw away. That model is no longer sustainable.

We must move towards reduce, reuse, recover and recycle. A plastic bottle should not automatically become rubbish the moment we finish drinking from it. An aluminum can is not rubbish, glass is not rubbish, cardboard is not rubbish - many of these materials have economic value.

What we call waste can become a resource and that creates an opportunity. Instead of spending money simply collecting and burying waste, we can create systems that recover materials, create businesses, generate income and protect our environment at the same time, and that starts with

our children.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the most important places we will begin this change is in our schools. The Ministry is progressing with the School Waste Management Initiative to strengthen proper waste practices among our children. Students are learning to reduce waste, separate waste, reuse materials where possible, recycle and dispose of the remainder responsibly, because children do something powerful - they take lessons from the classrooms back into their homes.

If we teach a child today that throwing a plastic bottle on the ground is unacceptable, we begin changing the behaviour of an entire generation. Our ambition is simple - a generation of Fijians who do not need to be told to litter because they would never think of doing it in the first place. That is a real behavioural change.

We are also developing container deposit regulations in close consultation with the industry. The principle is simple - return the container and get your deposit back. Instead of bottles and cans becoming rubbish, they become something worth collecting. That changes the economics of litter. Suddenly, the bottle lying beside the road is not just rubbish - it has value. The container deposit system can create opportunities for recyclers, businesses, collection operators, young people, community groups and families, and that is exactly where the Coalition Government wants to go. Turn waste into value, turn recycling into opportunity and turn environmental responsibility into everyday behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government cannot do this alone. The Government must provide the laws, policies, infrastructure and enforcement. Businesses must take greater responsibility for the products and packaging they import and they put into our economy. Municipal Councils must strengthen collection and local waste management. Communities and civil society must continue education and local action. However, ultimately, every one of us must take responsibility for what we consume and what we throw away.

A clean Fiji is everyone's business. We want a Fiji where –

- throwing rubbish from a vehicle is socially unacceptable;
- dumping rubbish into drains is unacceptable;
- indiscriminate dumping is unacceptable;
- burning rubbish is no longer the automatic answer;
- recycling is normal;
- returning containers is normal;
- children grow up knowing that caring for their environment is simply part of being a responsible citizen; and
- we do not need national clean-up campaigns to remind us to have pride in our own communities.

The Litter (Amendment) Act 2026 gives us a greater and a stronger accountability. The National Integrated Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy 2026-2035 give us the roadmap. The School Waste Management Initiative begins changing behaviour at the youngest level. The Container Deposit Regulations will help us recover value from materials that would otherwise become litter or landfill. Together, these initiatives represent a fundamental shift from cleaning up pollution to preventing it, from throwing away resources to recovering their value, from government carrying the responsibility to everyone sharing the responsibility.

However, legislation can only take us so far. We can increase the fine, we can appoint enforcement officers, we can provide bins and collection to improve it, we can introduce recycling

systems, but the Government cannot stand beside every person when they finish a bottle and decide what to do with it. That decision belongs to every Fijian and, perhaps, that is the most important environmental policy of all.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are so blessed with a beautiful country. We only need to talk to our tourists, like the DeWolf family, who have come all the way and shared continually how beautiful Fiji is. Our rivers, forests, reefs, beaches and oceans are not rubbish dumps. They are our inheritance. They sustain our communities, they support our economy, they feed our families, and they belong just as much to the Fijians who will be born 50 years from now as they belong to us today.

Our message is simple. If you litter, you pay. If you produce waste, take responsibility for it. If it can be reused, reuse it. If it can be recycled, recycle it and above all, do not leave your rubbish for somebody else or for the next generation to clean it up. It is not simply about keeping Fiji beautiful, it is about respecting it and that responsibility belongs to each one of us.

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

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to thank the honourable Minister for Information on Environment and Climate Change for bringing this statement before the House.

Let me say at the outset, Mr. Speaker Sir, that the Opposition does not stand here to oppose the objectives behind either of these initiatives. No member of this House disputes that litter is a real and visible problem in our towns, our cities and our villages. No member disputes that Fiji urgently needs a proper long-term system for managing waste and controlling pollution. Our beaches, our reefs, our tourism industry and the health of our people all depend on us getting this right.

However, Mr. Speaker, Sir, good intentions are not a policy, and a Ministerial Statement is not an implementation plan. My reply today will test these two initiatives against a simple question: Will they actually work, be funded and will they be fair to the ordinary Fijians?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me turn first to the Litter Amendment Act 2026. The Minister has told this House that the fixed penalty for littering will rise from \$40 to \$200, a five-fold increase. Where is the evidence base for that figure? Was this number modelled against comparable jurisdictions or arrived at by other means? Critically, Mr. Speaker, Sir, has the Ministry considered what a flat \$200 fine actually means across our population?

Hon. Members interject

HON. V. LAL.- For a struggling family, a market vendor or a young person, \$200 is a significant and punishing sum.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Yes, exactly!

HON. S. TURAGA.- That is the intention!

HON. V. LAL.- I ask the Minister whether a tiered structure distinguishing individuals from commercial offenders was ever considered and whether any hardship or payment plan provision will exist for those who genuinely cannot pay.

HON. S. TURAGA.- Just do not litter!

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Minister has told us that the little regulations that will

give this Act its practical teeth are still sitting with the Office of the Solicitor General awaiting gazettal, with commencement planned for the 1st of September 2026. That is a matter for weeks away.

I ask the Minister plainly, is Government confident these regulations will be gazetted in time? If they are not, what happens? Does commitment slip or does this Act come into force with the very regulations that define its operation still unfinished? This House deserves a straight answer because legislating a penalty regime without finalised regulations creates real uncertainty for enforcement officers who must apply the law and for citizens who are entitled to know exactly what conduct is being punished.

Then there is the question of enforcement itself. The Minister speaks of an expanded network of litter prevention officers. I welcome the principle, Mr. Speaker, Sir, however, principle is not the same as capacity. How many offices exist today? How many will this expanded network actually number? What training and resourcing in terms of vehicles, equipment, support will they receive? Will this presence reach our rural communities and our maritime and other outer island provinces, or will enforcement, as so often happens, be concentrated in Suva, Nadi and Lautoka while the rest of the Fiji is left behind? What safeguards will prevent this fine from being enforced inconsistently or unfriendly against those with the least power to contest it?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a fine only deters if people believe they will be caught. Without genuine enforcement capacity behind it, a five-fold penalty, increased risk being nothing more than a number on paper, tough in the press release, toothless on the street. I will put this to the honourable Minister directly, where is the investment in prevention alongside punishment? More public bins, more frequent municipal collection, public education, especially for our young people, because punishing littering without giving people somewhere else to put their rubbish does not change behaviour.

It simply criminalises the absence of infrastructure. I ask the honourable Minister, what is being done in parallel to support municipal councils and outer island communities that often lack basic waste collection services before those same communities face a fine four times higher than before?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Opposition supports the goals behind both of these initiatives and a cleaner Fiji properly managed waste system, a country that protects its environment for the next generation. These are not bipartisan aims, and we will not pretend otherwise for the sake of Opposition.

However, support for the intent is not and must never be mistaken for a blank cheque on the detail. This House and the people we represent are entitled to know how these measures will be funded, how they will be enforced and how they will be applied fairly to every Fijian, not just those who can most easily afford a \$200 fine.

I, therefore, call on the honourable Minister to table before this House the Draft Litter Regulations, the full text of the National Integrated Waste Management and Pollution Control Strategy and a costed implementation plan, so that proper scrutiny can take place before commencement, not afterwards.

MR. SPEAKER.- I was just going to welcome the Belgian family. Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of Ministerial Statements. We will now proceed to the next item of the Order Paper.

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please, kindly note the following before we proceed - Oral Question Nos. 125/2026; 129/2026; 131/2026; 133/2026; and 137/ 2026 will be asked at a later sitting when the respective Ministers who have been taken ill have recovered. At the same time, I have accepted the withdrawal of Oral Question No. 130/2026 by honourable Sakiusa Tubuna.

Cessation of Welfare Insurance (Question No. 126/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection update Parliament on the cessation of welfare insurance and how many family members who have been impacted can request and receive Government assistance for funerals, accidents and fire?

HON. S. KIRAN.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. I rise today to provide this august House with a comprehensive overview and a necessary reality check regarding the Social Welfare Insurance Scheme, which originally commenced in 2018. As we mark the cessation of this Scheme, it is imperative that we look objectively at the data to understand why this administrative decision is not just fiscally responsible, but long overdue for the people of Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, by way of background, the Ministry of Finance began paying for this micro-bundled insurance as an initiative to increase the penetration of this product in 2018. The Scheme initially covered civil servants and social welfare recipients. However, civil servants were subsequently removed from the Scheme due to the high cost of maintaining their coverage.

Under the arrangement, the Government pays quarterly premiums for eligible recipients, with age-restricted coverage that applies to term life for insureds aged below 70 years and funeral cover for insureds aged below 75 years, while personal accident and fire covers remained open.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us look closely at the financial footprint of this policy. Over the past eight years, the Government has diligently paid approximately \$60 million in hard-earned taxpayers' funds to FijiCare Insurance Limited as premiums. However, a deeper dive into the metrics reveals a stark and troubling imbalance. Out of that \$60 million, only \$33.8 million actually reached our citizens as direct payouts.

To give you a clearer insight, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the 2023-2024 financial year, \$7.1 million was paid in premiums, while only \$3.8 million was paid out in claims. In 2024-2025, \$7.2 million was paid in premiums and, again, only \$3.8 million was paid out in claims. Most recently, in 2025-2026, \$7.7 million was paid in premiums and only \$3 million out of that was paid out in claims.

From a macroeconomic perspective, Mr. Speaker, this represents an incredibly inefficient use of public capital. On average, a mere 56 percent of the total funds paid out by Government ended up in the hands of the beneficiaries. The remaining 44 percent did not serve our poor, instead, it was absorbed by administrative friction, overheads and private corporate margins. No responsible government can look at a 44 percent loss in welfare capital and call it an economically sound delivery mechanism. In macroeconomics, we call this a deadweight loss to our public finances.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to put things into further perspective, let us analyse the operational reality over the last five years. Government has consistently injected roughly \$7 million annually into this policy to cover around 100,000 insured welfare recipients. Yet, out of the 100,000 citizens, the insurance framework has only processed an average of 5,000 claims annually. We are paying massive premium blocks for a system where 95 percent of the covered population sees no tangible touchpoint or benefit in any given year.

Furthermore, we must look at the economic reality of who this policy actually serves. The data clearly shows that the primary beneficiaries are family members rather than the elderly recipients themselves. They receive one-off financial assistance for life and funeral costs, which dropped drastically from \$1,500 for those under 60 years, to only \$500 for seniors aged between 60 years and 69 years. It covered fire up to \$3,000, personal accidents up to \$3,000, but look at the structural underutilisation of these funds, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

Personal accidents under this Scheme are extremely rare. To highlight this, in the entire 2022-2023 financial year, there were only four paid-out accident claims across the nation, costing a total of \$10,500. For six years, we have been holding millions in public capital hostage for an accident cover that is virtually untouched.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we must talk about the economic principle of opportunity cost. Every single dollar we locked away in private insurance premiums was a dollar taken away from direct high-multiplier economic investments. By ceasing this highly inefficient framework, we are freeing up millions in liquidity. Fiji's social safety net must be direct, impactful and efficient. Shifting away from this insurance model allows us to reallocate precious resources directly to those who need them the most.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to assure this House that removing this insurance Scheme will have minimal to no impact on the existing social welfare recipients. The Government will continue to provide direct social welfare allowances under six comprehensive schemes.

For the upcoming 2026-2027 fiscal year, we have locked in a massive total investment of \$184 million across these essential pillars:

- (1) Family Assistance Scheme - \$46,464,600;
- (2) Child Protection Allowance - more than \$18 million;
- (3) Social Pension Scheme - more than \$82 million;
- (4) Food Allowance for Rural Pregnant Mothers - more than \$420,000;
- (5) Allowance for Persons with Disabilities - more than \$18 million; and
- (6) Transport Assistance Scheme - more than \$14 million.

Mr. Speaker, let us address the specific contingencies. There are several types of accidents. For personal accidents resulting in feminine, partial, or total disability, robust financial assistance is already provided through relevant State agencies, including our Ministry. Furthermore, the Accident Compensation Commission Fiji (ACCF) scheme is fully available. Family members can easily apply for compensation through ACCF, which currently sits under the ministerial assignment of my colleague, the honourable Minister for Justice, and is administered through a Board chaired by the Permanent Secretary for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations.

For our citizens living with disabilities, our protection extends far beyond simple insurance payouts. We provide dedicated allowance for disabled individuals, direct grants to organisations supporting persons with disabilities and focussed funding for the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Housing actively funds the retrofitting of homes to

accommodate disabled individuals.

When it comes to essential healthcare and tragic situations like unclaimed bodies, these supports are managed by Ministry of Health and Medical Services. Our people actively prefer to visit public hospitals or utilise the Free GP Medical Scheme, a reality proven by the significant increase in the Ministry of Health's budget and the expanding utilisation rates of the GP Scheme. Our Ministry covers the funerals in our State homes and those who have been abandoned by their family.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the new financial year, immediate emergency relief has been seamlessly accommodated within our State structures. Immediate fire relief is directly budgeted under our Ministry through assistance to fire victims at \$75,000, while the long-term fire construction budget is covered by the Ministry of Housing at \$200,000.

Additionally, public rental housing continues to be heavily subsidised by the Government, with social welfare recipients counted among the core tenants. Education and health services remain free, and bus fares continue to be subsidised.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these allocations clearly indicate that across the whole of Government, we have more than sufficient safety nets in place, and we continue to build on these as we identify real gaps with the new schemes that may be needed.

The discontinuation of this Scheme forms a central part of the Government's ongoing efforts to streamline assistance programmes, eliminate fiscal wastage, and avoid the duplication of services already funded through other targeted Government initiatives. This programme has been suspended and will undergo a thorough review to integrate stronger governance mechanisms, data-driven beneficiary verification, and a structured coverage framework that reflects actual demand and true national priorities.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.— Mr. Speaker, Sir, I was listening to the honourable Minister very carefully. This is an insurance product that we are talking about – it is not a fund that is set aside where you can make profit and losses. The idea is to protect people when they face challenges.

Now, the honourable Minister has very clearly explained the fire, how that will be covered, and I appreciate that. That is very clear. The only area where I have a bit of a problem is with personal accidents. Can the honourable Minister tell us how much funds have been set aside to cover this?

MR. SPEAKER.— Do you wish to clarify a bit more? I think I can see some puzzlement on the face of the Minister.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.— Previously, the insurance covers three areas which are personal accident, fire and funeral. The honourable Minister very clearly said that fire is well covered. They have money set aside to do that, and that is fine. She also mentioned about the funeral. She clarified that those who are abandoned and those who die in the State house are taken care of, otherwise, the Minister for Health comes in. About personal accidents, she mentioned the Accident Compensation Commission Fiji, which only looks at motor vehicle accidents. Therefore, I am talking about personal accidents, is there any money set aside which can cover that?

HON. S. KIRAN.— That depends on the type of accident. As you will see from the cover, there has not been many claims. Once someone does get impacted, we do support them through disability allowance. When we looked at the data, there had been very minimal claims for any personal accident. I think we are covered enough under our disability programme to support those

who may need it.

MR. SPEAKER.- Do you wish to follow up on that, honourable Kumar?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Yes, Sir. One can be involved in an accident, but you are not disabled, so I am talking about that category. How are they assisted? I do understand if they become disabled, then disability allowance will kick in, but ACCF deals with motor vehicle accidents. I know that. You are talking about personal accidents, for example, you fall.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Yes, I am talking about those accidents that can happen in the home or when you are out and about, because that is what the insurance is meant to cover. An insurance is not something where we are going to look at whether we have that level of returns, because sometimes, insurance companies also incur losses depending upon the claim. While the country is trying to push for more people to take up insurance, here we have a situation where we are trying to cut down insurance.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, do you wish to respond?

HON. S. KIRAN.- From the records, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there had been very minimal on such claims, so it is not covered.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question to the honourable Minister is, we remember that all social welfare recipients used to receive Government assistance for funeral. That has been removed from the Budget Estimate, and I think we argued on that. I might have missed it, but can I ask you to explain, please? We want to know, people are very cautious about it. We know that all social welfare recipients used to request for \$1,000 for funeral assistance. Since it has been removed from the Budget Estimate, how will you accommodate that?

HON. S. KIRAN.- I think I have explained that already. The funeral expense is not covered under the insurance scheme anymore. We are looking at SOPs to support those who may need it internally, but it is no longer covered through the insurance scheme. We have internal support systems that I had talked about that we provide support with.

Criteria for Projects in the Divisions
(Question No. 127/2026)

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

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Service, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics inform Parliament on the criteria used to decide on the projects that will be carried out in respective Divisions?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I respond to the question, may I compliment the Secretary-General and members of the staff for the communication we got from them very early this morning after we rose so late last night, and the emailed copy of the *Uncorrected Daily Hansard*. So, yesterday, all that long proceeding, all to be recorded on paper and transmitted to us is a great testament to the industry of your staff, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

I rise to respond to honourable Lal's question, which I feel is very important and timely. The Government has a responsibility to plan and prioritise public investment carefully. We must ensure that our limited public resources are directed to protect and advance our national ambitions and deliver meaningful benefits to the people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, project selection is guided first and foremost by the National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These national frameworks guide the preparation of our annual budgets and the allocation of resources across Ministries and Divisions. They are considered together with our fiscal and development priorities, including:

- (1) reducing the deficit;
- (2) improving the debt-to-GDP ratio; and
- (3) maintaining fiscal sustainability.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government must continue to invest in poverty reduction, education, health and medical infrastructure, social infrastructure, public safety, law and order, and other essential services.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, resource allocation is also informed by the development profile of each Division, as the question refers to Divisions. Planners use data from the Fiji Bureau of Statistics and other relevant sources to identify:

- (1) differences in population;
- (2) service access;
- (3) infrastructure needs;
- (4) economic activity; and
- (5) social conditions.

This evidence-based approach helps Government target resources where the needs and potential development impacts are greater. It supports our commitment to ‘leaving no one behind’, and promoting balanced development across Fiji. Project selection, therefore, considers national priorities, sector plans and specific development needs of communities and regions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government also applies the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) Framework to strengthen the assessment and prioritisation of major public investments. The PSIP Guidelines, developed with technical assistance from the Asia Development Bank (ADB), provide a structured process for the preparation, appraisal and approval of major projects. Cabinet endorsed the implementation for 10 pilot Ministries and agencies for the 2024-2025 Budget process, with further Government-wide implementation being strengthened.

Under the PSIP Framework, new projects above the \$2 million threshold are assessed against key criteria, including:

- (1) alignment with the National Development Plan and relevant sector plans;
- (2) economic, social and environmental benefits;
- (3) climate change and disaster resilience implementation;
- (4) administrative financial capacity;
- (5) project readiness and feasibility; and
- (6) proposed risk management measures.

Projects below the threshold of \$2 million are considered through the normal budget process, with appropriate assessment of their relevance, readiness, affordability and expected benefits. The objective is to ensure that projects are properly assessed and sufficiently prepared before public funds are committed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, development grants administered by the Office of the Prime Minister

complement these broader investment processes by addressing priority community-level needs. Projects are considered against established procedures and Government priority, with particular attention to urgent and demonstrated community needs, improved access and productivity, basic services in essential infrastructure, economic opportunities and access to markets, social and economic benefits, and the sustainability and longer-term impact of the investment.

Government also recognises the particular challenges faced by rural, maritime and remote communities. Priority is, therefore, given, where appropriate, to projects that improve access to roads, water, sanitation, electricity, education, market or trading posts, and other essential services. This approach supports balanced development and ensures that location alone does not disadvantage communities in accessing Government investment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, project selection must also take into account the fiscal resources available to Government. Government cannot finance every development aspiration in a single financial year. Projects must, therefore, be prioritised according to their national importance, community impact, readiness, affordability and available financing. Where priority projects cannot be accommodated within Government-available resources, Government continues to engage development partners and other financing sources to mobilise additional essential investment.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government is further strengthening these processes through the Public Financial Management Improvement Plan 2026-2031, which was endorsed in April of this year. Public investment management is a key priority under the Plan, covering the full investment cycle from planning and prioritisation to allocation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, Sir, projects are not selected simply on the basis of location or individual request - they are prioritised through a structured and evidence-based process that considers our national ambitions, fiscal position, sector priorities, regional development needs, community priorities, project readiness, economic and social impact, resilience, risk, and available financing.

Through this approach, Government seeks to ensure that every public dollar is used responsibly and delivers the greatest possible benefits to our people. Most importantly, our objective is to promote inclusive and balanced development across all Divisions, reduce disparities in access to services and opportunities, and ensure that no community and no Fijian is left behind. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, my supplementary question is, how does Government ensure that project selection is based on community needs rather than political considerations?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- A rhetorical question, Sir, that is correct.

MR. SPEAKER.- Before we move on, I especially thank the honourable Prime Minister for his kind words addressed to the Secretary-General and staff. I am sure it is much appreciated by them. Judging from your crackling voice, honourable Prime Minister, you can be excused to seek medical attention, should you wish to.

Registration, Recognition and Standard Framework
(Question No. 128/2026)

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

Can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation update Parliament on the steps undertaken to transition Tourism Enterprises from the Hotels and Guest Houses Act 1973 to the Registration, Recognition and Standard Framework, following the passing of the Tourism Act 2026?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank honourable Kuridrani for the question. The passing of the Tourism Act 2026 is one of the most significant reforms of Fiji's tourism regulatory framework in decades. Think about how far we have come over the last two decades. We have not just grown, we have transformed. We have seen our visitor numbers climb and our tourism earnings double, reflecting the hard work of families from our coastal towns to our mountain villages.

Today, we welcome nearly a million visitors to our shores, a milestone that speaks to the spirit of Fijian hospitality. For the first six months of this year, Fiji recorded 460,628 visitor arrivals. This represents an increase of 16,866 visitors, or 3.8 percent year-on-year. This growth has built more than just hotels and resorts; it has fostered a new era of community-based tourism, eco-adventures in our interior, to the shared homes of the digital age.

While our industry has reached for the future, our laws have remained anchored in the past. That is why this Government has introduced Fiji's ever tourism legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our immediate priority is to now ensure a practical and industry-supported transition from the Hotels and Guesthouses Act 1973 to the new framework which is being administered by the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation. I wish to highlight five key areas of implementation.

(1) Transition of Existing Operators

The Act provides transitional protection for businesses currently licensed under the Hotels and Guest Houses Act 1973. Existing licences and approvals will continue to be recognised for up to 12 months following commencement, providing operators with sufficient time to transition to the new Tourism Enterprise Register. That means that existing operators will not simply lose their ability to operate when the new framework commences.

The intention is to provide a managed transition, with the Ministry assisting enterprises to understand and progressively meet the new requirements. This transitional approach was specifically contemplated when the legislation was presented to Parliament.

(2) Establishment of the Tourism Enterprise Registration Framework

Mr. Speaker, Sir, unlike the previous legislation which focused primarily on hotels and guest houses, the Tourism Act provides a framework for the broader tourism industry. The new system will, therefore, progressively bring tourism enterprises, including accommodation providers, tour operators, guides, dive operators and tourism experiences, within a common tourism framework.

Under the Act, registration involves classification under the Tourism Classification System, followed by formal recognition once the applicable legal and tourism requirements are satisfied. Recognised enterprises will receive a Recognition Certificate, and the Tourism Enterprise Register will be publicly accessible.

(3) Development of the Recognition Pathway for Industry and the Fiji Tourism Standards

Mr. Speaker, Sir, registration is not intended to simply create another licence. The objective is to establish a pathway that supports enterprises to improve their quality, sustainability, and compliance over time.

The Fiji Tourism Standards will comprise the Tourism Industry Standards, applying to individual enterprises, and the Tourism Destination Standard, supporting better management of tourism destinations.

Importantly, the Framework recognises that Fiji's tourism industry is diverse. It, therefore, provides for a tiered classification approach that recognises community, indigenous and micro-tourism enterprises, alongside small, medium and large operators, for the first time.

(4) Supporting Implementation Arrangements and Regulations

The Ministry is progressing in supporting implementation arrangements and regulations. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Act deliberately provides for a number of operational matters to be prescribed through regulations. These include the detailed Fiji Tourism Standards, fees, tourism fund administration and other implementation requirements.

The Ministry's focus is, therefore, on ensuring that the necessary regulations, registration processes, administrative systems, guidance and institutional arrangements are in place to support commencement. This is important because we do not want to impose new requirements on the industry before the Government itself is operationally ready to administer it.

(5) Industry Awareness and Readiness Central to the Transition

The Ministry will undertake targeted awareness and engagement with existing licensed establishments and the wider tourism industry so that enterprises understand –

- whether they are required to register;
- how they will be classified;
- the documentation and requirements for registration;
- the standards applicable to their category of operation;
- the recognition pathway available to them, and
- the timeframe within which they must transition.

This will be particularly important for smaller operators, community-based enterprises and businesses that were not previously captured under the Hotels and Guest Houses Act 1973.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of timing, commencement will be appointed by the Minister. The Government's approach is to align commencement with operational readiness, and then utilise the transitional period provided under the Act to progressively migrate existing enterprises into the new system.

The Ministry will, therefore, communicate clear transition dates and compliance requirements to the industry ahead of implementation. We do want adequate transition time before the full registration requirements take effect.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, ultimately, this reform is about moving Fiji away from a regulatory system designed primarily for hotels in the 1970s to a modern tourism governance system, covering the wider tourism economy. For the industry, it means clearer rules, nationally consistent standards, recognition of quality operators, and a pathway to progressively improve standards. For Government, it provides a better visibility of the tourism enterprises operating across Fiji and a stronger basis for policy, planning, standards, and industry development.

For our visitors, it provides greater confidence that tourism enterprises operating in Fiji are working within a recognised national framework for quality, sustainability and compliance. As I stated when introducing the legislation to this august House, the objective is that the rules are clear, the standards are fair, and compliance is rewarded.

HON. I. KURIDRANI.- Mr. Speaker. Sir, we all understand that standard is very important in tourism, and so do in other service industries, and it forms a major part of the Tourism Act. Can the honourable Minister enlighten the House as to who is involved in advising the Ministry on standards?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a very good supplementary question. As I have highlighted when I spoke on this, we compared ourselves with many countries with similar tourism products, countries like Kenya, Nepal, Seychelles, Maldives, Croatia and Costa Rica. To do this, we needed to work with some global partners, and the two that are dominant in this are the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the SWITCH-Asia organisation, through the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO). So, regulation is going to be key to all these, and we are working with renowned operators to ensure that our regulations meet the expectations of the industry.

HON. F. S. KOYA. - Mr. Speaker, I actually have two questions, but I will ask one first. In the transition to the new Tourism Act 2026, one of the entities with respect to regulations that are set up for hotels and licensing, et cetera, is a body that sits with the Attorney-General's Office, the Hotel Licensing Board. In this transition, will that mean that the authority of the Licensing Board is minimised, or are we eventually looking at phasing out the Licensing Board? What will be the status of the Hotel Licensing Board that currently sits under the Office of the Attorney-General?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the work is happening now in developing regulations within the Ministry. Towards the end of the year, consultation will begin in the manner that is required to fully tie these up. We should be starting with this from the beginning of next year.

Anyone who has a licence under the old Act will continue to operate during the transformation period for 12 months, or until the permit they are carrying expires. What will replace the old Act is the Enterprise Register that is determined by standards, and that will register every operator according to the tier they belong to. Out goes the old Hotels and Guest Houses Act 1973 and in comes the Tourism Register, which will be managed by the Ministry.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- I am not sure if it was answered. I was really inquiring about the status of the Hotel Licensing Board, which actually gives the licences. That is the authority that gives the licence to every single hotel that operates in Fiji. That Board sits under the Office of the Attorney-General and forms a very critical component in terms of all the licensing. Will that Board no longer be in existence after what you had just said?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, you will only be able to operate a tourism operation if you are under the Ministry's Tourism Register. In essence, out goes the old Act, and everything is going to be controlled through the Tourism Register that is in the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I was disappointed with the honourable Minister's response to the question that was raised by the honourable Member, all wishy-washy, but finally he told us exactly the steps he is taking. Based on the steps you are taking now, can the honourable Minister inform us whether any assistance will be provided to small and locally owned operators so that they can adopt the standards that you are talking about?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Again, there are two very important bodies that will be helping us and, that is, IFC and SWITCH-Asia organisation through SPTO. The setting up of standard is a very challenging and complex operation, as you can appreciate. Included in that is the assistance that we provide to the MSMEs and the body known as Cultural Indigenous Tourism Enterprises (CINTE). You may want to have another look at the other Act; it is quite comprehensive and spells out who is going to be part of this, and is going to be very inclusive, and how they will be assisted.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Miniter, you mentioned a few organisations that are giving assistance with respect to the transition. One of the foremost authorities on tourism is the World Tourism Organization (WTO) based in Madrid. The WTO has actually been of assistance to Fiji for many, many years. Whilst doing this, has the WTO also been engaged to assist us with respect to the transition to the new law on what is needed and what is not?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- I cannot say that definitively but, yes, we had reached out to just about anyone to help us in drafting this Act. I could verify that later, Sir, however, I would believe the WTO would have been involved in this. We engage them in many forums, and I can confirm definitively whether they are part of the process, going forward.

World Surf League Championship Tournament
(Question No. 132/2026)

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

Can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation update Parliament on the value derived from Government's partnership and the hosting of the World Surf League Championship Tour event at Cloudbreak?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this must be my lucky day. I thank the honourable Member for the question.

The Government recognises sport as a powerful driver of destination marketing, visitor spending and nationwide profile. The partnership with World Surf League and the hosting of the Championship Tour at Cloudbreak is one of the clearest examples of how a well-chosen sporting event can deliver values across tourism, aviation, local business and communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, under Cabinet Decision 320 of 2023, Fiji approved a three-year commitment, from 2024 to 2026, to host the World Surf League Championship Tour, and on 11th September, 2023, the Ministry executed an agreement with World Surf League Limited. In August 2025, I announced that the partnership had been extended for a further three years, securing the Fiji Pro on the Championship Tour through to 2029.

Allow me to let the House know that this is conducted on a Grand Prix basis, where there they compete to surf in about eight venues across the world. There is a lot of competition to host this, and Fiji is fortunate that it has won the hosting rights up to 2029 for one of these events.

Cloudbreak, off Tavarua Island, is globally recognised as one of the finest waves in the world. The Championship Tour returned to Cloudbreak in 2024 after an absence of several years.

In 2025, Cloudbreak hosted the Lexus WSL Finals Fiji presented by Corona Cero, from 27th August to 4th September, which is the 12th and final stop of the season, and the event that crowned the year's world champions.

In 2026, we will host a full regular season event, called the Fiji Pro, from 25th August to 4th September, as stop number eight on the Championship Tour. We are number eight in a circuit of 12.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the outcomes of the 2025 event, as reported to Cabinet, demonstrate the value of this partnership returns. The first and most significant return is global brand exposure. As the official strategic partner, Tourism Fiji secured total brand exposure valued at over FJD15.95 million, or over USD6.96 million. That was made up of:

- (1) FJD7.5 million in social media value;
- (2) FJD7.5 million in digital and linear broadcast value; and
- (3) Over USD257,000 in media plan advertising.

Set against an annual investment of approximately FJD2.2 million, this is destination marketing that the Ministry could not purchase outright at anything close to the same cost.

The event reached a global audience. It garnered 7.7 million total views across live and on demand platforms, with the largest audiences in the United States of America, Brazil and Australia.

On social media, 657 branded posts generated more than 125.7 million impressions and more than 70.9 million video views. The event achieved more than 4,000 press placements across more than 30 countries, with a global advertising value equivalent to AUD61 million.

The second return is direct economic impact. The 2025 event injected a total of FJD2.63 million or USD1.17 million into the local economy. This spending was spread across event infrastructure and local contractors, hotels and lodging, airfares Fiji Airways, catering, facility hire, transport and local marketing. An estimated 4,250 spectators attended the course of the event, and 125 individuals took part directly as athletes, coaches and staff.

The third return is legacy infrastructure. The Cloudbreak Surf Tower, built by the World Surf League in 2024, for the Nabila and Momi Villages, is a lasting asset that will continue to attract future events and bring tourism to the region.

The fourth return is community and environmental benefit. Across the 2025 event, 17 initiatives were delivered across indigenous, community and environmental areas. These included the WSL One Ocean conversation programme delivered with Conservation International, the Fiji Surf Association and Mamanuca Environment Society, a youth surf clinic and coastal cleanup at Natadola Beach, water trauma training and paid event roles for members of the Fiji Surf Association, and dedicated specialty heats, with prize money, for local surfers. The event was delivered under a strict no single use plastics policy. It opened with a traditional ceremony acknowledging the *Vanua* of Nabila and Momi for providing access to Cloudbreak.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the event also falls outside the peak holiday period, helping to spread visitors spending across the year, and it positions Fiji alongside a small number of premier surfing destinations in the world. These returns align directly with the National Sustainable Tourism Framework and the Government's strategy to diversify tourism, disperse visitor spending and grow high value sustainable tourism.

Measured against an annual contribution of approximately FJD2.2 million, a single edition of this event returned over FJD15.95 million in brand exposure and over FJD2.6 million in direct local spending. The partnership is a sound and measured investment in destination Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, hosting of the World Surf League Championship Tour at Cloudbreak

demonstrates how a targeted partnership can deliver returns well beyond its cost, placing Fiji on the world stage, while delivering tangible benefits to businesses and communities at home.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the biggest critic of international golf tournament has brought World Surf League Championship to Fiji. Congratulations, honourable Minister! My question is, what is the total Government commitment over three years for this event?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I have highlighted, it is \$2.2 million a year for Fiji to be part of this event. As I have said, the competition is stiff. Portugal wants it, Brazil wants it, other parts of the world want it, but it only goes to 12 locations in the world. I have invited some honourable Members of Parliament to be there in the next two weeks or so, when they have the next competition in Momi - in the Tavarua area. You have to see it; the quality, or the way they run this event. I mean, you have sponsors, like Lexus, which is a premier vehicle, Toyota, I mean, these are the kind of people who support this thing.

We were going to lose it but, fortunately, I was able to convince Cabinet to commit to this. I think, Ecuador was really running hot, wanting to take Fiji's slot, but Fiji got it.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a commitment excellence when people that used to talk against all these international events and the benefits that accrue from it, such as golf, and other people pushing this event. So, congratulations honourable Minister! Is there an opportunity for our local surfers to be going in as wild cards to also participate in the event so that they can also get some recognition and exposure?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- As I have said, there was a special event for our locals. A few of our people are getting in there, but you are talking about the superstars of surfing here. I mean, the Brazilian gentleman who won last year is a household name in the Americas and he appears in events. He would be another Ronaldo in terms of surfing.

Yes, our people are there competing, but with dedication and developing our surfing fraternity, we can grow some of our local people to compete at that level. I mean, these are the elites of surfing. You just see them there, and the followers. People came from Brazil to support their champ, the one who eventually won. You are invited to be there during the few days. They do a very good job. It is good if you can all see what it is and how it benefits Fiji.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is so nice to see the honourable Ministers having seen the light with respect to sporting events. Finally!

Of course, honourable Minister, this is a massive exposure for Fiji, and it is not just locally, it is obviously worldwide. These things get seen by millions and millions of people. We all understand the benefit. My question to you, honourable Minister, is with respect to the WSL and Cloudbreak, et cetera, can you explain what benefits accrue to the *iqoliqoli* owners and the landowning community with respect to that particular event?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a very strong relationship that has developed between the villages of Momi and Nabila with the surfing fraternity worldwide. One of the top surfers there, the American surfer, I do not have his name right now, but he walks around in Nabila and in Momi like he is a native. He has the affinity in terms of the Fijian way of life and the likes. Economically, they have built a tower in Tavarua. From this tower, you can watch people surfing on Cloudbreak. That tower is now given to the people of Momi and Nabila. They can monetise it. We were encouraging them to get proper management so that people can use it for filming or whatever because Cloudbreak, as I have stated, is one of the best in the world. You go

there on any day, for example, if it is a holiday in Fiji, you will see the people down at Pacific Harbour and how crowded it is. The patronage in there at Tavarua is huge.

We built this tower for them, built by the World Surfing League. It is given to Nabila and Momi, to own it and they operate it, monetise it, and the return will be significant.

MR. SPEAKER.- Thank you. That will do us, honourable Members, for the first half of the day. We will now suspend proceedings for lunch. Parliament will resume at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.33 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.45 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I have accepted honourable Sachida Nand's withdrawal of Question No. 134 of 2026.

(Question No. 134/2026 withdrawn)

Increase in CCTV Camera Installations
(Question No. 135/2026)

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

In light of the recent increase in CCTV camera installations along public roads within the Central Division, can the honourable Minister for Policing and Communications inform Parliament on the primary purpose of these installations and the technical specifications and capabilities of the cameras being deployed?

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for his question. I think it is a great question, very relevant to what the police are doing and in line with the Government's commitment to improve capabilities for the police to enhance their operations.

Before I do that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House of three questions that was raised by honourable Nand yesterday during the debate relating to three police reports in Sigatoka. One was about Kulukulu, one was about the house that was burnt and the third one was on the farm.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for your information, those three incidents have been attended to, and police have also notified the honourable Member early this morning. I wish to take this time to thank the police officers in Sigatoka for their response to that. I hope that in future, we do not need to use the parliamentary floor to address some of these operational issues. There are processes in place, and if we are able to do that, it would be most useful if we test the systems at the operation level, and that is important. However, I thank the honourable Member for raising those issues yesterday to me.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I dwell into the actual reply for the honourable Member, I also wish to register the importance of CCTV in the last few days and how we have attended to some cases on record sent by the population or community that has greatly assisted the police in identifying, arresting and charging culprits who were involved in various incidents in the community.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government is committed to ensuring that the Fiji Police Force (FPF) is well equipped with effective policing practices and modern technologies that it wants to introduce to enable proactive crime prevention strategies for the FPF. As I had mentioned yesterday, the crime landscape and security landscape have changed significantly. Therefore, we need to adopt the most effective means of addressing some of the challenges that the FPF face in ensuring that our community and people are safe and secure.

To achieve that, there has been a significant investment towards the CCTV camera installation programme under the Fiji Police Force Safe City Project, which is part of the four-year FPF's Strategic Plan 2025-2029. This aligns with the National Development Plan and the Ministry's Strategic Plan 2025-2030.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the primary purpose of CCTV camera installation is to:

- (1) deter and prevent criminal activities wherever it is;

- (2) support intelligence work and evidence submission in legal proceedings (also helps greatly);
- (3) monitor movement of people to promote public safety and improve public confidence;
- (4) support traffic management and monitoring on roads and highways;
- (5) offer real-time monitoring and rapid responses, and operational efficiency in response to emergency incidents; and
- (6) support and enhance police operations.

For this particular project, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are 230 CCTV cameras across the 50 sites along the Suva and Nausori Corridor. Currently, a total of 97 cameras is in operation. I wish to mention a few and where they are located:

- (1) 75 cameras between Suva Bus Stand and Suva Market Area. For those who are listening out there, I am sure you will be extra careful as you walk the streets in Suva.
- (2) 12 cameras installed around Ratu Sukuna Park.
- (3) 8 cameras around Albert Park, and 15 more cameras expected to be installed in the coming months.
- (4) 2 cameras around Stinson Parade, and more cameras to be installed beyond the CBD, including Nasese, Flagstaff and Toorak.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are also plans to expand to the Western Division along Nadi and Lautoka Corridor. There is also a question on the technical specification and capabilities. These are higher resolution cameras to help in identification, monitoring and recording of everything that is to be seen. In a very simple way, it is to see, monitor, record and identify.

To justify the installation of this, section 17(5) of the Police Act 1965 covers that part. There are also plans to have that included, and it is a provision in the new Police Bill 2026, which is still with the Standing Committee. We are mindful of the concerns by public and society when it infringes into people's lives. We are very careful with that, and these laws are intended to safeguard all these issues here.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, first, I want to thank the honourable Minister because we have been talking about CCTV camera. I am very delighted that the honourable Minister has taken that on board, and that will definitely provide a relief to people who use our cities and towns. I have two questions. First is, how can citizens who are interested in having their CCTVs wherever they have installed, maybe at the gate or on the street itself, connect with the FPF for monitoring because that will, again, increase the number of CCTVs for the FPF? My second question has more to do with monitoring - the monitoring capability. What is the capability of the Police to monitor all these CCTV cameras?

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the current operational arrangement is that all cameras within the city area are now centralised and can be watched from the Police Command Center (PCC) at Totogo.

In relation to the first question by the honourable Member, we encourage those who intend to do that to seek some sort of professional consultation, not only with expertise, but we also have a Communication and IT Unit within the FPF Headquarters where they can go and request advice from.

However, in regard to where they are connected, I have yet to see a community within Suva that has the entire community all connected and, perhaps, hooked up to the community police force close by. We are trying to do that in Namadi Heights, Mr. Speaker, Sir. However, in doing that, we need to be very careful that the cameras or the software is interoperable, and that is very important.

Therefore, it is very important that we get the right advice to do this.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for all intended purposes, I will acknowledge that a lot of the cameras that were captured by homes have greatly assisted the FPF to identify and arrest those who were involved in criminal activities. That was a great question, honourable Kumar.

Revision of Nadi Town Planning Scheme
(Question No. 136/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government update Parliament on the progress of the revision and extension of the Nadi Town Planning Scheme, and how the revised scheme will guide tourism, commercial and housing growth, while coordinating transport, drainage, wastewater and flood resilient infrastructure?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Nadi Town Planning Scheme was approved on 20th April, 1998. Discussions between the Department of Town and County Planning and the Nadi Town Council have commenced, and the revision is included in the Department's annual workplan for this financial year.

The main target is to prepare the revised scheme for the present approved town area, with provisional approval by June 2027. Work on the broader extension area will begin thoroughly but will proceed as a second statutory phase because it requires additional survey infrastructure assessment and consultation. The revision of the Nadi Town Planning Schemes is part of the Ministry of Local Government's plan towards the declaration of Nadi Town to a city within the next six to nine months.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Nadi is Fiji's principal international gateway, a leading tourism centre, increasingly important location for commerce, housing, logistics and employment. Its growth pattern today is very different from the Nadi that was planned in 1998. Since 1998, 105 approved scheme amendments within the existing Nadi Town Planning Scheme area and 934 approved rural re-zoning applications in Nadi rural and the wider growth area outside the approved scheme coverage were approved. Those figures tell a simple story that development has moved faster than the planning framework.

Residential growth has spread into the wider Votualevu, Legalega, Sabeto, Navo, Navakai, Nasau and Korovuto areas. Commercial activity has even strengthened around Martintar, Namaka, Waqadra, Narewa and Nadi Back Road, while Wailoaloa, Denarau and the Nadi Airport corridor continues to face tourism investment pressure. Until a revised scheme completes the statutory process, existing approved scheme remains in force. Development applications must continue to be considered under the law.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the revised scheme will identify appropriate tourism and business centres, strengthen established corridors, project areas of high tourism value, and prevent incompatible development from undermining residents, communities, or essential infrastructure.

Secondly, a revised scheme will identify land that can be safely and economically serviced for housing and little residential growth with employment areas, schools, public transport, open space, and community facilities. Industrial and logistic uses will be directed to locations with suitable access and buffers from sensitive residential and tourism areas.

Thirdly, the revised scheme will reserve land for road widening, transport connections, drainage, corridors, wastewater facilities, water and power infrastructure, as well as flood management works and public facilities. Major growth areas will be assessed against capacity and timing of those services. Areas in capacity can proceed first, while areas requiring major upgrades will be staged so that the development does not arrive years before the infrastructure needed to support it.

Fourthly, the revised scheme will contain a dedicated section on climate change, which is very important, as well as on disaster risk and resilience, and will address changing winds, rainfall, river and surface water, flooding, sea level rise, drainage capacity, emergency access, and the resilience of public infrastructure.

Particular attention will be given to the Nadi River and its flood plains. Controls may include appropriate river sediments, protection of maintenance access, preservation of natural drainage and overflow areas, restrictions on unsuitable development and rain or flood management corridors. The final controls will be based on technical studies, flood mapping and consultation.

The Scheme, Mr. Speaker, Sir, will also be aligned with the Nadi Flood Alleviation Project. The new development must support and not obstruct present or future flood protection, as well as drainage and waterway works.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to make the programme transparent, the Ministry will work on the following milestones. In the first two months, the Department and Nadi Town Council will finalise a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a joint planning and infrastructure steering committee, confirm the boundary of the first phase scheme and the wide extension study area, and agree on base maps, data, staffing, logistics and reporting dates.

Between October 2026 and February 2027, the team will carry out the land use survey, site verification and photographic record to review past approvals and actual development on the ground, and obtain infrastructure information from the Fiji Roads Authority, Water Authority of Fiji, Energy Fiji Limited, National Fire Authority and agencies responsible for Environment, Waterways, Land and Disaster Management.

In February and May 2027, the Department will prepare the report of the survey, the preferred growth framework, the draft scheme statement, the general provisions, the scheme plan and zoning map. Technical and community consultations will be used to test the proposed growth areas, river controls, infrastructure, reservations and development standards.

After provisional approval, the scheme must be publicly notified. Owners and occupiers have statutory rights to object, and objections and any appeal must be resolved. The required modification must be made and only then can the scheme receive final approval and come into operation. July 2027 is the target for provisional approval and not the end of the statutory process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the extension is not an afterthought. Survey, mapping and infrastructure work for the wider growth area will start alongside the first phase. The difference is that the extension must be based on evidence about where growth is safe, serviceable and affordable. Given the extent of the division and the proposed extension area, it is anticipated that statutory processes, particularly finalisation following public notification, may continue into the next financial year.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the greater Nadi and Lautoka Master Plan and the Nadi Town Planning Scheme will have different but connected roles. The Master Plan will provide a wider long-term direction for settlement, tourism, transport, infrastructure and climate resilience across the Western

urban corridor. The Town Planning Scheme will translate that direction into statutory zoning, development controls and a protected infrastructure corridor for Nadi.

The Town Planning Scheme will not replace the legal mandate of any infrastructure agency. Its role is to provide a great special framework so that each agency can plan and deliver its services in the right place and the right time. By July 2027, the revised Scheme for the present approved town area is targeted for provisional approval after which statutory objection, appeal and final procedures will follow. The extension will continue in a staggered manner so that new urban land is brought forward only where transport, drainage, wastewater, flood resilience and other essential services can support.

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a supplementary question to the honourable Minister. How will landowners, infrastructure agencies and key economic sectors be engaged during the revision scheme?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a very good question. The engagement will be carried out through targeted consultations, technical meetings and public awareness. Landowners, residents, tourism operators, commercial stakeholders, even transport providers and agencies such as EFL, Water Authority of Fiji, FRA and other relevant environmental agencies will be consulted so that those in decisions are aligned with infrastructure capacity, as well as fighting risk, housing demand as well as economic growth.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for this revised plan. The question is regarding the transport infrastructure, and the honourable Minister may know from Lautoka, Anupam Theatre to Nadi where the temple is, there is a big traffic congestion. Talking about Nadi, for the Nadi Back Road, for this plan, do you see a double lane being considered for the Nadi Back Road to ease traffic?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Thank you for that question, honourable Member. I had a meeting with the new Chairman of the FRA, as well as the divisional engineer for the FRA last Friday. There were discussions on how can FRA, in consultations with stakeholders as well as Nadi Town Council in the improvement of traffic flow in the main town, as well as the back road. That is something that they are working on, hopefully, it will be resolved in the near future.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a supplementary question. What happens to the developments that have already taken place, but the infrastructure is not to the standard that we would expect? If you go to Legalega towards Votualevu, the road that leads into the agriculture station, beautiful homes are constructed, but the dust from that road and it goes all the way up. What happens to these developments that have already taken place, but the standard of the infrastructure are not to the level that we would want?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for raising this. These are some issues that need to be discussed further with the relevant agencies, especially FRA on how best this infrastructure can be upgraded. I believe there were developments that happened a long time ago and going forward, they need to be escalated and discussed with relevant authorities so that the road standards can meet everyone's expectations as far as these new developments are concerned.

Coastal Protection Projects - Lau Group
(Question No. 138/2026)

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Information, Environment and Climate Change inform Parliament on what specific seawall or coastal protection projects are planned for the vulnerable shores in the Lau Group in the 2026-2027 financial year?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.— Mr. Speaker, I thought he was going to ask me about Ra, but I am glad he has also covered Lau.

Mr. Speaker, the direct answer is that there are currently no confirmed seawall or coastal protection construction projects for the Lau Group in the 2026-2027 financial year. However, Lau is not being overlooked. The coastal protection works are prioritised and implemented through the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways. More than 160 coastal communities across Fiji have requested assistance, far exceeding the resources currently available. That is why the Government is actively pursuing climate finance from our development partners.

Through the Adaptation Fund, Fiji has secured \$5.7 million for the Strengthening the Adaptive Capacity of Coastal Communities through Nature-Based Seawalls project. This will deliver approximately 4.3 kilometres of nature-based seawalls across 14 high-risk communities in Macuata, Cakaudrove, Nadroga/Navosa, Ra and Lomaiviti, but our work does not stop with those 14 communities. For Lau specifically, discussions are already underway for Ogea Island in the *Tikina* of Fulaga. The Department of Climate Change is working with the Provincial Administrator of Lau and the Department of Waterways to identify funding for a nature-based seawall.

Our approach must be based on risk, science and the needs of communities. Earlier this year, we submitted to Cabinet 43 communities prioritized for detailed climate risk assessments, including three communities in Lau – Waciwaci, Avea and Lomaloma. These assessments will determine whether communities can be protected through seawalls and other adaptation measures, or whether planned relocation may ultimately be necessary. This is important, Mr. Speaker, relocation is always the last option.

Our first priority is to help communities remain safe on their land, wherever that is possible. The Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways leads coastal protection works, while our Ministry supports this through Fiji's National Adaptation Plan and by securing the climate finance necessary to turn identified priorities into projects.

To conclude, there is no confirmed Lau seawall construction in this year's programme, but there is active work underway. Ogea is being progressed, Waciwaci, Avea and Lomaloma are being assessed and we will continue pursuing climate finance for vulnerable communities throughout Lau. Our islands may be on the front line of climate change, but they will not be at the back of the line when it comes to climate action.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I am glad to see that work will be done in the village of Waciwaci, which has mortar around it and is always subject to flooding. I am just wondering, Mr. Speaker, in terms of Narikoso in Kadavu, is there any plan to complete the relocation? I think seven houses have been built, how about the rest?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am very familiar with the situation in Narikoso, and the *Marama Tui Raviravi*, when we visited the village in 2022, had actually expressed concern because of the relocation project that was conducted during their time. They relocated eight homes initially to the hills, but they were missing kitchens. It was a quite a basic need for the community and so they could not move up to the homes because there were missing kitchens.

Through the Ministry of Women at the time, the Australian Government came on board and

funded the implementation of the kitchens. As far as the remaining homes, yes, it is definitely of concern because their water is coming up into the village. That is also one of the projects under the relocation fund and we will assess it as we go along.

HON. J. USAMATE.- In terms of Waciwaci, honourable Minister, is it just for the village or also to continue the relocation of the school?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- As I mentioned, the assessment is still underway and relocation, let me emphasise, is always the last option because it means that you actually leave where you have lived for generations and including the school, many children attended it so they have a lot of connection to it. So, relocation is always the last plan for any community that is facing the effects of climate change. We hope to avoid it.

We will see other ways of getting around it including adaptation. However, if it is certainly assessed that they need to relocate, then it will happen. For schools, that is something we have to work with the Ministry of Education because if they do their assessment, because they look after the assets of the Ministry and the schools come under them, and if they do assess that it needs to be done, then they will let us know.

Sustainable and Lower Emission Aviation Infrastructure
(Question No. 140/2026)

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

Can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation update Parliament on measures in place to advance sustainable and lower-emission aviation infrastructure and how these measures support Fiji's aviation sustainability commitments and the Civil Aviation Master Plan 2026-2031?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we know, Fiji is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Therefore, while aviation remains essential to our economy, the Government is committed to ensuring that future aviation growth is accompanied by investments that improve sustainability, strengthen resilience and reduce emissions wherever possible.

This commitment is reflected in the Civil Aviation Master Plan. I would like honourable Members to pick one of this and get familiar with the Civil Aviation Master Plan. The commitment is reflected in the Master Plan 2026-2031, Fiji State Action Plan on CO₂ emission reduction from international aviation, Fiji's Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement and our ongoing engagement with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Fiji State Action Plan was developed in accordance with ICAO Assembly Resolution A41-22 and outlines the protocol measures that Fiji is implementing to reduce carbon emissions from international aviation and contribute towards ICAO's long-term aspirational goal of net-zero aviation emissions by 2050. The Action Plan identifies a range of measures, including fleet modernisation, improved air traffic management, airport energy efficiency, sustainable aviation fuels, and renewable energy infrastructure.

One of the most significant projects currently underway is the Nadi Airport Solar Farm. Earlier this year, Fiji Airports awarded a contract to CBS Power Solutions Fiji Limited for the development of a 3.25-megawatt solar power system at Nadi International Airport, and construction officially commenced in July 2026. The project will become the largest airport-based solar development in Fiji, and one of the most significant renewable energy investments undertaken within

the Pacific aviation sector.

The solar farm is being developed to provide clean, renewable and electricity for Nadi's principal international gateway. Nadi International Airport currently consumes approximately 2.5 megawatts of electricity. When completed, the solar farm will generate sufficient renewable energy to meet current airport demand, thereby sustainably reducing reliance on conventional electricity sources while strengthening operational resilience and long-term energy security.

Importantly, the project has been designed with future growth in mind. Fiji Airports has advised that approximately 25 percent surplus generated capacity will be available during peak periods, creating opportunities to support future airport development and contribute excess electricity back to the national grid. Moreover, a second phase is being assessed which could expand production capacity to between 8 and 10 megawatts, potentially supported by battery energy storage systems.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the significance of this project extends beyond electricity generation. It strengthens the resilience of a critical national asset that serves as Fiji's primary international gateway. Every year, thousands of visitors and substantial volumes of international trade pass through Nadi International Airport. Ensuring a reliable and sustainable energy supply for airport operation is, therefore, a matter of national importance.

The project also directly contributes to the reduction of navigation-related carbon emissions. Fiji's State Action Plan specifically identifies the installation of a solar farm at Nadi Airport as a mitigation measure, capable for supporting emission reduction and advancing Fiji's broader sustainability objectives. The plan identifies the airport renewable energy projects as an important component of Fiji's pathway towards net zero aviation emissions and alignment of international climate commitments. The solar farm forms part of a wider package of sustainability measures being implemented across the aviation sector.

The State Action Plan records several ongoing initiatives being undertaken by Fiji Airports and Fiji Airways to reduce emissions and improve efficiency. These include:

- Investments in more fuel-efficient aircraft;
- Improvements to air traffic management procedures;
- Performance-based navigation systems;
- Enhanced surveillance technologies;
- Replacement of traditional airport lighting with energy-efficient LED systems;
- Reduction in airport electrical demand; and
- Introduction of cleaner operational practices.

On the airline side, Fiji Airways has progressively modernized its fleets through the introduction of Airbus A350 and Boeing 737 MAX, both of which deliver substantial fuel efficiency improvements compared with previous generation aircraft. The airline has also implemented a range of operational measures to reduce fuel consumption and emissions, including fuel monitoring systems, continuous descent operations, reduce contingency fuel requirements, and other operational efficiency measures.

The Government is also supporting work on sustainable aviation fuels. Fiji's State Action Plan includes ongoing assessment of locally produced sustainable aviation fuel derived from sugarcane-based feedstocks. This demonstrates the breadth of Fiji's approach to aviation decarbonisation and provides opportunities to create new economic activities while reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these investments are fully aligned with the Civil Aviation Master Plan 2026-2031. The Master Plan recognises that future airports must be safe, resilient, technologically advanced, and environmentally sustainable. Sustainable infrastructure is no longer an option or consideration. It is central to maintaining competitiveness, reducing operating costs, enhancing resilience to climate-related events, and meeting international expectations regarding environmental performance.

Initiatives like the Nadi International Airport Solar Farm, therefore, deliver multiple benefits simultaneously. They strengthen energy security, reduce emissions, support climate resilience, improve operation reliability, and contribute to long-term economic sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji Airport has also established itself as a regional leader in airport sustainability. The Nadi International Airport became the first and only international airport in the Pacific to achieve level four transformation status under Airports Council International's Airport Carbon Accreditation Programme, demonstrating Fiji's commitment to international best practice in carbon management and emissions reduction.

As we continue to develop our aviation sector, the Government remains committed to balancing growth with sustainability. We will continue working closely with Fiji Airports, Fiji Airways, ICAO, development partners and industry stakeholders to ensure that Fiji remains a leader in sustainable aviation within the Pacific region.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, projects such as the Nadi International Airport Solar Farm demonstrate that Fiji is translating policy commitments into tangible action. They show that economic development, aviation growth and environmental responsibility can advance together, delivering benefits for travellers, businesses, tourism operators and future generations of Fijians.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a supplementary question; what are some of the key learning outcomes and challenges faced during this period?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.-

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the staffing level, the expertise within aviation needs to continue to be upgraded. Capacity building is a huge part of the challenges with Civil Aviation, as outlined in this - the time it takes to execute some of these projects. I launched this solar farm in Nadi, went through some very competitive bidding, but eventually went to a company that was well-known for this kind of task.

Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) is also challenging. We can make it in Fiji by using sugarcane as a feedstock, but then you will need to produce about 3 million tonnes of cane to produce the volume - the quantity of SAF that would make it economical and make us a producer of SAF in this part of the world. Those are some of the challenges that we have.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Obviously, we are not on the scale, for example, Western Sydney International Airport, Boise International Airport, where you have total decarbonisation actually happening with respect to the airport. Because ours is of a smaller scale, do you see us getting to the total decarbonisation model with respect to our particular airport, in a shorter space of time, or is that the main aim to get it done? I am also talking about ground fleets, et cetera, becoming completely electrified.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, what I saw when I launched that solar farm in July was an indication that every entity can invest in something similar. The cost of this is quite economical, and it can produce 3.25 megawatts for the airport community. Just about every

community can create their own solar farm. I think it is a great example that we can all emulate going forward. This is the first of its type.

I saw it, while I was launching it, I could see it happening in many parts of Fiji. As I highlighted here, this is the first stage. They can go up to 8 megawatts or 10 megawatts. Let us just watch how the solar farm is completed in Nadi and how it operates, and it can be replicated across the country. I am quite confident it can be done on a scale that suits whatever community. That, to me, is critical going forward.

Effectiveness of Asset Declaration Regime
(Question No. 141/2026)

HON. P.D. KUMAR asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Finance update Parliament on the implementation and effectiveness of the mandatory Asset Declaration Regime for registered sole traders, which came into effect on 1st January, 2026?

Mr. Speaker, I know it is not into effect at the moment, so I cannot ask the rest of the question, Mr. Speaker, Sir, but I will just put it, if the Minister can explain why there is a delay in getting this Asset Declaration Regime in place?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the mandatory Asset Declaration Regime for registered sole traders was announced as part of the 2026-2027 Budget with an implementation date of 1st January, 2026. Honourable Kumar rightly mentioned, and I wish to clarify that for the benefit of this House that the Regime has not yet been implemented.

Following the Budget announcement, the Fiji Revenue and Customs Service (FRCS) undertook a detailed work to develop an appropriate and practical framework to operationalise the measure. Following this work, together with stakeholders' consultations, the implementation date has been revised to 1st January, 2027. A public notice was issued around 4th February, 2026 informing all taxpayers that the initiative would be deferred to a subsequent filing period to allow sufficient time for system development, policy refinement and stakeholder readiness.

Sir, FRCS recognises the importance of implementing such a reform in a practical and efficient manner. Once the system design and operational framework are fully completed and tested, FRCS intends to undertake a comprehensive stakeholder awareness and education programme as well during the final quarter of this year (2026), to ensure taxpayers clearly understand the requirements before the implementation date on 1st January, 2027.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a key consideration in developing this framework has been to ensure that the requirement is practical, proportionate and appropriately targeted, without creating unnecessary compliance burden for taxpayers. Registered sole traders vary considerably in terms of their size, nature, and scale of operation.

It was, therefore, important to carefully determine the categories of assets that will be subject to declaration, the level of information required, as well as the manner in which declarations will be made. As part of this process, Mr. Speaker, Sir, two rounds of stakeholder consultations were undertaken on the draft framework. The feedback received through these consultations has assisted FRCS in refining the framework and ensuring that the final requirements achieve the intended compliance objective while remaining practical for taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the declaration process will also be digitalized and integrated into FRCS' online tax system. An additional feature will be available as part of the tax return filing process, enabling affected sole traders to submit their asset declaration electronically when lodging their tax returns. This is intended to simplify the process and minimise additional administrative requirements.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, again, the fundamental objective is to strengthen tax compliance and transparency by providing FRCS with additional information to support risk assessment and the verification of declared income, particularly, as the information will assist FRCS in identifying material inconsistencies between taxpayers declared income, business activities and asset position, which may warrant further review.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- A supplementary question; honourable Minister, prior to the launching of all of these, because this actually concerns a lot of small businesses and sole traders are pretty much small businesses, was there a consultation exercise prior to all of these? Is there a cost associated with all of these to the sole trader once it is actually implemented?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- As I mentioned, consultations were done after the declaration, not prior.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, I think what the honourable Minister has just said is complete ineptitude. You come up to Parliament with a suggestion to do something, then you say that you did the consultations after you received the approval, and that sounds hilarious. Will there be additional costs for sole traders when they implement this particular system?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- There will not be no additional cost, but an additional compliance that the sole trader will have to meet. They will do it in the initial implementation stage. After that, it will be just a review of the existing asset declaration form.

Update on Fiji Mahogany Certification Process
(Question No. 142/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry update Parliament on the progress of the certification process for Fiji mahogany?

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, the Fiji Hardwood Corporation Limited (FHCL) is committed to achieving the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Forest Management Certification to ensure environmental sustainability, promote responsible forest practices, and secure access to premium global markets for Fijian mahogany.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, FSC certification is a key strategic milestone that will strengthen the international reputation and commercial value of our timber industry. The FHCL commenced its certification journey in 2022, in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Ministry of Forestry. Following an initial gap analysis, FHCL has systematically upgraded its operational practices, policies, standard operating procedures and documentation.

To accelerate this critical work, the Government provided a dedicated grant of \$956,000 in the 2024-2025 National Budget to fund environmental and social studies, boundary demarcation, forest inventory, software and equipment procurement, and specialized personnel recruitment. Mr. Speaker, to-date, environmental and social impact studies were successfully finalized early this year. Significant progress has been made on boundary demarcations, stakeholder consultations, and staff

capacity building.

Most recently, from 20th to 24th July this year, the Scientific Certification System (SCS) Global Services, an internationally accredited FSC certification body, conducted a second FSC preliminary audit of FHCL's operations. The audit confirmed the substantial progress made since 2023, while identifying severe corrective action requests.

In response, Mr. Speaker, FHCL is currently executing a focused six-month workplan to address all the corrective action requests and ensure their total alignment with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) forest management standard prior to the final audit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, FHCL plans to undertake its final FSC forest management certification audit in late 2026 or early 2027. Following this milestone, FHCL will immediately pursue FSC chain of custody certification to ensure full end-to-end product traceability and market credibility.

The FSC certification is vital to safeguarding Fiji's standing in the international sustainable timber trade. The Ministry of Forestry and FHCL remain committed to delivering this certification to protect our forest resources, avoid costly market risks, and maximise long-term returns for the people of Fiji.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Honourable Minister, I hope you can answer this question. Currently, in the absence of the certification for Fiji mahogany, we are limited in terms of market access. Honestly, I am not familiar with the current markets now. Would you be able to tell this Parliament where Fiji mahogany is currently being exported to, and what will be the new opportunities in terms of market when the certification process takes place? I did mention in the last Parliament, honourable Minister, that there is a container stuck in the United Kingdom simply because of the certification process.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, currently, Fiji exports the Fiji mahogany logs to China and to the US. Those are the two countries that I know that do not require FSC certification for the export of mahogany logs.

To answer your question about the shipment that was detained in the UK, Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I may, the container remains in the UK pending the issuance of required certification by FHCL, which is anticipated by December 2026 or early 2027. As I had mentioned, upon issuance of the certification, FHCL will proceed with the shipment of the container to Fiji.

The acceptance of the certification, given that it will be obtained subsequent to the export date, will remain subject to the buyer's final review and requirements. At this stage, no further operational intervention is required until the certification is secured. The Ministry is closely monitoring this matter through to December of this year, to ensure all subsequent logistics and documentation requirements are executed seamlessly.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Is there a price differential or value differential in certified mahogany vis-à-vis, the kind that we are selling that is uncertified. Is there a big difference in the price? Will it then have an impact on the amount of money we can get? I am thinking about our people who plant mahogany out there.

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, yes, there is, because currently, we are just exporting mahogany logs, we are not value-adding the mahogany that we export. I can get back to you on the details of the price difference of our mahogany logs that we export.

Written QuestionsStatistics on Constructed Road Humps
(Question No. 143/2026)

HON. P.D. KUMAR asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport inform Parliament on the following, the -

- (a) total number of road humps constructed since 2023;
- (b) total cost incurred; and
- (c) total number of road humps that have been removed during the same period?

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the response will be tabled by the Minister responsible at a later sitting date, as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

Freehold Land Buyback Scheme
(Question No. 144/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources inform Parliament on the number of ancestral land that have been returned to traditional clans and landowning units under the Government's Freehold Land Buyback Scheme?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 45(3), I will table my response at a later sitting of Parliament.

Statistics on Financial Services Ombudsman Office
(Question No. 145/2026)

HON. P.D. KUMAR asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Finance update Parliament on the following, the -

- (a) total number of complaints received, resolved, pending and dismissed by the Office of the Financial Services Ombudsman from 2024 to date, broken down by year and category of complaint;
- (b) number of investigations initiated by the Office from 2024 to date and the outcomes of those investigations; and
- (c) annual budget allocation, actual expenditure and staff establishment of the Office from 2024 to date?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

Information on Justices of Peace
(Question No. 146/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General inform Parliament on the following:

- (a) the number of Justices of the Peace;
- (b) where they are located; and
- (c) how much are they paid?

¹ HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, I hereby table my response to this question.

Teachers' Qualification and Salary
(Question No. 147/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Education provide Parliament with the following:

- (a) between 1st August, 2025 and 30th June, 2026, how many teachers applied for a salary upgrade following the submission of upgraded qualifications; and
- (b) during the 2026-2027 financial year, how many teachers will receive a salary upgrade, as a result of upgrading their qualifications?

² HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the response will be tabled by the honourable Minister at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

Voter Awareness and Registration Programmes
(Question No. 148/2026)

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

The Fijian Elections Office (FEO) has conducted a number of voter awareness and registration programmes across the country and internationally. Can the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General update Parliament on the following, the

- (a) total number of awareness programmes conducted to date;
- (b) number of eligible voters who have been registered through these initiatives; and
- (c) estimated number of additional voters the FEO expects to register ahead of the next general election?

³ HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby table my response to the question.

Statistics on Expired Medicine in Divisions
(Question No. 149/2026)

HON. P.D. KUMAR asked the Government, upon notice:

¹ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 146/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure I.

² Reply to Written Question No. 147/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education, under Standing Order 45(3) is appended as Annexure II.

³ Reply to Written Question No. 148/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure III.

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament on the total quantity and value of expired medicines in the Central, Eastern, Western and Northern Divisions, by year, from 2023 to date?

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Minister will table his response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

Ice Plants on Solar and Other Forms of Fuel
(Question No. 150/2026)

HON. J.R. VOCEA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry inform Parliament on the number of ice plants that are solar driven and how many are using other forms of fuel?

⁴ HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby table my response to the question.

OPEX and CAPEX – Municipal Councils
(Question No. 151/2026)

HON. P.D. KUMAR asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government inform Parliament on the following for each Municipal Council over the last three financial years, the -

- (a) approved operating expenditure (OPEX) and the actual operating expenditure incurred; and
- (b) approved capital expenditure (CAPEX) and the actual capital expenditure incurred?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Report on the Commercial Use of Marine Areas Bill 2025

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Report of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights on the Commercial Use of Marine Areas Bill 2025 (Bill No. 42/2025). This Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights to scrutinise and to report back its findings to Parliament.

The Commercial Use of Marine Areas Bill 2025 seeks to repeal the Regulation of Surfing Areas Act 2010, and replace it with a new legislative framework governing the ownership, administration and commercial use of marine areas in Fiji.

The Regulation of Surfing Areas Act 2010 was introduced as a decree, and upon its commencement, vested all designated surfing areas in Fiji wholly and absolutely in the Director of Lands while simultaneously terminating all existing arrangements relating to surfing areas without compensation. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Act fundamentally shifted control of surfing areas to

⁴ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 150/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure IV.

the State and removed the ability of customary owners to directly manage or benefit from such arrangements.

The Committee further noted that the proposed Bill represents a significant departure from the approach adopted under the 2010 Act. Rather than vesting ownership and control in the State, the Bill seeks to establish a framework that facilitates the reversion of proprietary ownership of commercial marine areas to the customary owners of those areas. The Bill aims to ensure that this process is undertaken in a fair and equitable manner, consistent with the rule of law and the principles of natural justice, while balancing the interests of customary owners, existing interest holders, investors and the wider public.

The Committee observed that the Bill also seeks to promote the active participation of all persons and entities likely to be affected by the reversion process. Mr. Speaker, Sir, in addition, it provides a greater role for indigenous institutions in the management, control and administration of commercial marine areas, with the objective of ensuring that the benefits arising from the commercial use of these areas are shared more meaningfully with *iTaukei* communities.

As part of the review, Sir, the Committee conducted public consultations in targeted areas to gather opinions and feedback from the public. The Committee received support and recommendation on the introduction of the Bill from majority of the public who had participated in the public consultation. However, like most activities that impact the lives of the people of a country, there will also be other suggestions that are based on the premise of making improvements.

Consideration was also given to the impact of the Bill on Fiji's efforts in meeting its targets and Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee acknowledges the concerns raised by the submitters and has deliberated at length on concerns raised. The Committee is confident that all issues raised have been addressed and that the Bill is sufficient as it is with some minor amendments.

I thank the honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights. On behalf of the Standing Committee, Sir, I hereby commend the Commercial Use of Marine Areas Bill (Bill No. 42/2025) to Parliament, and I seek the support of all the honourable Members of this august House.

(Report handed to the Secretary -General)

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, pursuant to the resolution of Parliament on Monday, 1st December, 2025 and on Friday, 13th March, 2026, the Standing Committee has now tabled its Report, and the Bill will be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Wednesday, 19th August, 2026.

Report on the Pasifika Communities University Bill 2026

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Report of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights on Pasifika Communities University Bill 2026 (Bill No. 09/2026). This Bill was referred to the Committee pursuant to the Standing Orders of Parliament and was tasked with examining the provisions of the Bill.

During its deliberations, the Pacific Theological College (PTC), has served the Pacific region for approximately six decades by providing theological, pastoral leadership and higher education programmes. Sir, the proposed transition to Pasifika Communities University reflects the institution's commitment to expand its educational mandate, modernise its governance arrangements and enhance

its capacity to serve Pacific communities through teaching, research, leadership, development and community engagement.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is imperative to note that the University is owned by 20-member Churches across the Pacific region and are responsible for funding the costs of the operation of the University. In that regard, the Bill seeks to formally provide legal recognition of the University as a University registered and operating within Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee undertook a comprehensive review of the Bill, including consultations with key stakeholders and the consideration of public submissions. Majority of submissions received were supportive of the proposed legislation, recognising the institution's important contribution to higher education and leadership development across the Pacific.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee also received valuable recommendations relating to drafting, governance provisions, statutory definitions and the preservation of indigenous terminology within the Bill. These submissions were carefully considered and contributed to the Committee's assessment of the Bill, in which the outcome is presented before this august House with the amended Bill.

The Committee further noted that the Bill supports Fiji's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 on quality education. The establishment of Pasifika Communities University will contribute to improving access to higher education and promoting inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for people across the Pacific region.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, after careful consideration of all the submissions and concerns raised during the consultation process, the Committee is satisfied that the objectives of the Bill are sound, and that the issues raised by stakeholders have been addressed adequately. While the Committee has recommended several minor amendments to improve clarity and drafting consistency, it is of the view that the Bill provides an appropriate legislative framework for the establishment, governance and operation of Pasifika Communities University.

At this juncture, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of my fellow honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of the Standing Committee, I commend this Report to Parliament and seek the support of all honourable Members for the Pasifika Communities University Bill 2026.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, pursuant to the resolution of Parliament on Monday, 25th May, 2026, the Standing Committee has now tabled its Report, and the Bill will be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Wednesday, 19th August, 2026.

Report on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill 2025

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the last Report of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill 2025 (Bill No. 37/2025).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to provide a brief background, Fiji supported the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, commonly known as UNDRIP, in March 2023, signaling its

commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of indigenous peoples within its borders. This endorsement aligns Fiji with international standards for the recognition of indigenous people's rights, including cultural preservation, land rights, and participation in decision-making processes.

The purposes of UNDRIP are to recognise and protect the rights of indigenous peoples globally. It seeks to affirm their rights to self-determination, cultural identity, land and resource ownership, and participation in decision-making processes that affect them. In addition, UNDRIP emphasizes respect for their unique cultural traditions, languages and spiritual practices, while promoting their social, economic and political inclusion. It also aims to combat discrimination and marginalisation faced by indigenous communities, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights upheld at national and international contexts.

The Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill 2025, therefore, seeks to provide for the UNDRIP in Fiji with its primary objective to formally acknowledge, uphold and promote the inherent rights of indigenous people as the indigenous inhabitants, ensuring that their cultural, social, economic and political rights are safeguarded in accordance with international standards.

The Bill establishes mechanisms for the recognition of traditional land and resource rights, promotes the preservation and revitalisation of indigenous cultural heritage and language, and ensures the active participation of the indigenous community in decision-making processes after affecting their welfare. Moreover, it provides for the legal frameworks to monitor, protect and advance the rights of indigenous people, fostering an inclusive and equitable society that respects indigenous sovereignty and promotes sustainable development, aligned with their aspirations and customary laws.

As part of the review, the Committee conducted public consultation in targeted areas to gather opinions and feedback from the public. The Committee received support and commendation on the introduction of the amendment Bill from majority of the public who participated in the public consultation. However, like most activities that impact the lives of our people, there were also other suggestions that are based on the premise of making improvements.

Consideration was also given to the impact of the Bill on Fiji's efforts in meeting its Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee acknowledges the concerns raised by the submitters and has deliberated at length on the concerns raised. The Committee is confident that all issues raised have been addressed, and that the Bill is sufficient as it is, with some minor amendments.

In that regard, I would like to thank the honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights - honourable Koya, honourable Usamate, honourable Niudamu, honourable Sachida Nand and honourable Tuiwailevu.

On behalf of the Standing Committee, Sir, I hereby commend the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Bill 2025 (Bill No. 37/2025) to this august House, and I seek the support of all Members in this Chambers.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, pursuant to Standing Order 121(1) and Standing Order 86, the Standing Committee has now tabled its Report, and the Bill is set down for consideration by the Committee of the Whole Parliament on a future sitting date.

Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of our sitting today. Congratulations, honourable Members! You have done wonderfully well in finishing early today and we all deserve to have an early evening and rest. Parliament is adjourned until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.04 p.m.

ANNEXURE I

Reply to Written Question No. 146/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General (Ref. Page 1691)



MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL
(Hon. S.D. Turaga)

Reply to Question No. 146/2026 is as follows:

(a) How many Justices of the Peace are there?

As of 18 August 2026, there is a total of **682** active Justices of the Peace in Fiji.

(b) Where are they located?

As of August 2026, Fiji has a total of 682 Justices of the Peace (JPs) located across the country. Thirty-three are located in the maritime region.

Division	No. of JPs
Central/Eastern	339
Western	271
Northern	72
Total	682

Maritime Region	
District	No. of JPs
Lomaiviti	10
Lau	9
Taveuni	6
Kadavu	5
Bega	1
Vatulele	1
Yasawa	1

While JPs are available throughout many parts of Fiji, there are still areas where their numbers are limited or where additional JPs are needed. These include the maritime locations of Yasawa, Yacata, Cikobia, Kadavu, Yanuca and Rotuma, as well as interior areas in Namosi, Naitasiri, Ba, Navosa, Macuata, Cakaudrove and Bua.

The distribution of JPS highlights the need to continue strengthening access to JP services, particularly in remote, maritime and interior communities, so that people throughout Fiji can access these important services more easily.

(c) How much are they paid?

Justices of the Peace (JPs) receive an allowance of \$100 per month, subject to the submission of their monthly reports and the provision of services to a minimum quota of 50 customers per month where applicable. Requests for exceptions to the quota is to be submitted in writing to the Team Leader.

For the 2025-2026 financial year, a total of \$477,100 was paid out in JP allowances. The

approved budget for JP allowances for the current financial year is \$600,000, which will continue to be provided to eligible JPs through monthly payments of \$100.

The processing of applications for the next round of JP appointments commenced in August 2026. A total of 30 applicants will be appointed.

From the current financial year onwards, appointment of new JPs will be limited to 30 applicants per financial year. All applicants will undergo a thorough vetting and selection process, with appointments based primarily on the identified need for JP services within particular areas.

Once the successful applicants have been finalised, a date will be determined for their induction and swearing-in ceremony. This approach will help ensure that new JP appointments are made strategically, particularly in areas where there is a demonstrated need for greater access to JP services.

ANNEXURE II

Reply to Written Question No. 147/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Education (Ref. Page 1691)



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

Reply to Question No. 147/2026 is as follows:

- (a) Between 1st August, 2025 and 30th June, 2026, the Ministry received a total of 410 applications from teachers seeking a salary upgrade, following the attainment and submission of upgraded qualifications.
- (b) Out of the 410 applications received, 273 applications have been identified for processing during the 2026-2027 financial year, subject to the availability and release of the required funding.

ANNEXURE III

Reply to Written Question No. 148/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General (Ref. Page 1691)



**MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL
(Hon. S.D. Turaga)**

Reply to Question No. 148/2026 is as follows:

- (a) The Fijian Elections Office (FEO) conducted three major awareness initiatives for the period from 2025 to 2026. These three initiatives are set out below and include all the relevant information from each programme:

- (i) 4th May, 2025 to 19th June, 2026 - Your Election Your Say (YES) Outreach Nationwide Awareness

Divisions	Sessions	Total No. of Attendees
Central	469	6,218
Eastern	208	5,090
Northern	481	7,099
Western	444	9,702
Total	1,602	28,109

- (ii) 2025 to 2026 - YES Outreach Overseas Awareness

Dates	Country	Total No. Of Sessions	Total No. of Engagements
Year 2025			
05/05-21/05	United Kingdom	15	467
27/09-03/10	Tuvalu	6	33
25/09-27/10	Australia	39	703
05/10-18/10	New Zealand	16	389
20/10-21/10	Cook Islands	2	150
08/10-10/10	Samoa	4	41
11/10-14/10	American Samoa	3	82
27/10-13/11	USA	13	224
13/11-19/11	Solomon Islands	6	27
29/11-01/12	Marshall Islands	4	53
03/12-07/12	FSM	2	18
08/12	Hawaii	2	18
Total		112	2,205
Year 2026			
30/01-02/02	Nauru	4	108
21/03-05/04	Tonga	5	146
23/06-04/07	New Zealand	23	584
20/06-08/07	Australia	34	478
06/07-11/07	USA	6	237
06/07-10/07	Papua New Guinea	4	118
13/07-15/07	Vanuatu	3	46
11/07-13/07	Kiribati	2	26
12/07-14/07	Hawaii	3	22
19/07-27/07	Canada	6	84
25/07-01/08	Palau	8	52
Total		98	1,901

- (iii) 11
- th
- November, 2025 to 31
- st
- July, 2026 – Community Elections Advocate Awareness

Total No. of Awareness Sessions	Total No. of Engagements
1,719	16,714

- (b) The FEO conducted two major registration initiatives for the period 2025 to 2026. These two initiatives are set out below and include all the relevant information from each programme:

- (i) 4
- th
- May, 2025 to 19
- th
- June, 2026 - Your Election Your Say (YES) Outreach Nationwide

Awareness:

YES Outreach Nationwide Voter Registration Drive	Accumulated Summary
New Registrations	8,158
Correction and Update	61,723
Replacement	28,091
Total	97,972

- (ii) 2025 to 2026 - YES Outreach Overseas Awareness:

Dates	Country	No. of New Registrations	No. of Corrections and Replacement	Total Registrations
Year 2025				
05/05-21/05	United Kingdom	211	256	467
27/09-03/10	Tuvalu	1	32	33
25/09-27/10	Australia	62	641	703
05/10-18/10	New Zealand	67	322	389
20/10-21/10	Cook Islands	20	130	150
08/10-10/10	Samoa	7	34	41
11/10-14/10	American Samoa	5	77	82
27/10-13/11	USA	72	152	224
13/11-19/11	Solomon Islands	6	21	27
29/11-01/12	Marshall Islands	7	46	53
03/12-07/12	FSM	3	16	18
08/12	Hawaii	7	11	18
Total	12	468	1,738	2,205
Year 2026				
30/01-02/02	Nauru	2	106	108
21/03-05/04	Tonga	21	125	146
23/06-04/07	New Zealand	90	494	584
20/06-08/07	Australia	50	428	478
06/07-11/07	USA	43	194	237
06/07-10/07	Papua New Guinea	14	104	118
13/07-15/07	Vanuatu	4	42	46
11/07-13/07	Kiribati	3	23	26
12/07-14/07	Hawaii	7	15	22
19/07-27/07	Canada	41	43	84
25/07-01/08	Palau	0	52	52
Total	11	275	1,626	1,901

- (c) As of 31
- st
- December, 2025, there are currently 707,982 registered voters. The next updated voter statistics will be released by 31st August, 2026.

Exercise	Data Period Reviewed	Registered Voters	Deceased Removed	Flagged as Inmate	Reinstated	Renounce Citizenship
July 2023	Jan-Jun 2023	695,435	4,263	48	66	0
January 2024	Jul-Dec 2023	698,593	3,819	152	19	0
July 2024	Jan-Jun 2024	701,022	5,321	49	71	0
January 2025	Jul-Dec 2024	705,130	3,645	-	-	7
July 2025	Jan-Jun 2025	701,140	9,633	-	-	1
January 2026	Jul-Dec 2025	707,982	3,442	484	34	2
TOTAL			30,123	733	190	10

ANNEXURE IV

Reply to Written Question No. 150/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry (Ref. Page 1692)



MINISTER FOR FISHERIES AND FORESTRY
(Hon. A.V.B.C. Bainivalu)

Reply to Question No. 150/2026 is as follows:

Ice production, Mr. Speaker, Sir, remains one of the core services the Ministry of Fisheries delivers to support our licensed fishers and fishing communities across Fiji. Ice serves three key purposes in post-harvest processes:

- (1) It reduces fish spoilage and keeps fish fresh. Bacteria begin to attack fish the moment it is caught and removed from the water. In a tropical environment like Fiji, this process occurs very rapidly.
- (2) Ice helps to maintain the quality and value of the catch. Premium markets and buyers will only accept fish that meet high-quality standards, which helps fishers earn better income.
- (3) Ice ensures food safety. It keeps fish safe for consumption, reduces the risk of bacterial contamination and poisoning, and ensures that the public has access to safe, affordable fish.

Ice Plant Operations Across Coastal and Maritime Areas - Current Status

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Fisheries currently operates 24 ice plants across the four Divisions. Out of these, two ice plants are solar-powered, nine are powered by diesel generators, and thirteen are powered through the Energy Fiji Limited grid and the Public Works Department electricity supply.

In February, earlier this year, the Ministry of Fisheries commissioned a new ice machine in Taveuni as part of the phase-out of the old machines. We are also currently installing a new ice plant at the Labasa Fisheries Station to better serve our licensed fishers in the North.

The Ministry of Fisheries is deeply grateful for the support provided by the Government of Japan through the Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation (OFCF) of Japan. Through this partnership, we have received funding for the new ice machines, the replacement of aging equipment, ongoing maintenance, and technical training for our Ministry technicians to ensure proper maintenance and monitoring of the machines.

Progress Towards Renewable Energy

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is committed to moving towards renewable energy solutions. In particular, we are investing in solar-powered ice-making systems to support our licensed fishers in remote maritime island communities.

During the last financial year, the Ministry procured three saltwater solar ice flakes machines to support fishers in Moce Island in Lau, Vatulele Island in Nadroga Navosa, and Cikobia Island in Macuata, with internal processes underway for installation.

For the current financial year, the Ministry plans to procure and install four additional saltwater solar ice flake machine for our maritime fishing communities. These saltwater solar ice flake machines are targeted for remote and maritime communities that face inadequate or unreliable freshwater supply. By using seawater and solar energy to produce ice, they reduce dependence on freshwater, diesel fuel, and conventional electricity.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is steadfast in its commitment to support our fishing communities through sustainable and practical investments in fisheries infrastructure. We are focused on ensuring reliable access to ice, improving the quality and value of the catch, minimizing post-harvest losses, and delivering better returns and improved livelihoods for our fishers.