

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

TUESDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 2026

[CORRECTED COPY]

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TUESDAY, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 2026

The Parliament met at 9.55 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Members were present, except the honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade; the honourable Minister for Information and Environment and Climate Change; the honourable Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs, honourable Professor B.C. Prasad; and honourable S.S. Kirpal.

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 28th September, 2026, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPEAKER

Welcome

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

Honourable Members, please, join me in welcoming the Law students from the University of the South Pacific. Welcome to your Parliament. I hope that today's proceedings will provide you with some enlightenment on the workings of your Parliament. Thank you for joining us today.

Tribute to the Late Honourable Inosi Kuridrani

Honourable Members, as in the case of our two former Members of Parliament, the honourable Vatimi Rayalu and honourable Agni Deo Singh, who died while in office, serving the Parliament of Fiji and the people of Fiji, your Parliament, with the assistance of the responsible Ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways, has draped the late honourable Inosi Kuridrani's chair with flowers and wreath, and *masi* (tapa) today, signifying our sorrow and deep feeling of sadness at his passing. May he rest in peace. It is my prayer and wishes that this will be the last such occasion we indulge in this exercise in the remaining term of this Parliament.

To move on, honourable Members, you would have already noted that 20 Oral Questions and 10 Written Questions on today's Order Paper. In exercise of its powers, under Standing Order 124(4)(c), the Business Committee has taken a decision on Thursday, 24th September, 2026, to consolidate Monday 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 the question time today.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Review Report on the Ministry of Local Government 2019-2020 Annual Report

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs' Review Report on the Ministry of Local Government's 2019-2020 Annual Report. This review forms part of the Committee's oversight responsibility to examine the performance, achievements, challenges and accountability of Government Ministries and agencies.

The Committee carefully considered the Ministry's Annual Report and engaged with Officials to seek clarification on matters relating to municipal governance, urban development, infrastructure projects, waste management and legislative reform. Through this process, the Committee identified several key findings and made recommendations aimed at strengthening service delivery, supporting sustainable urban development and enhancing the effectiveness of Local Government institutions throughout Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee acknowledges the Ministry's ongoing efforts to promote sustainable town and city development, advance major infrastructure projects and align its work with the National Development Plan and Sustainable Development Goals. The review also highlighted challenges relating to project implementation delays, municipal rate arrears, waste management and urban expansion, which require continued attention and collaboration amongst each stakeholder.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I extend my sincere appreciation to the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs: honourable Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, honourable Alipate Tuicolo, honourable Viam Pillay, honourable Alikia Bia, honourable Parveen Bala and honourable Ketan Lal, for their dedication, valuable contributions and commitment throughout the review process.

I also would like to thank the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Local Government and its executive team for facilitating with the required information.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this Report to Parliament and trust that its key findings and recommendations will positively contribute to improving Local Government services and promoting sustainable development for the people of Fiji.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move:

A motion, without notice, that a debate on the content of this Report is initiated at a future sitting.

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

MR. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

Consolidated Review Report on the Consumer Council of Fiji 2020-2024 Annual Reports

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs Consolidated Review Report on the Consumer Council of Fiji 2020-2021 and 2023-2024 Annual Reports.

The Committee's scrutiny process included a detailed assessment of the Annual Reports, written submissions and discussions with Officials of the Consumer Council of Fiji. The Committee also considered additional information provided during the review process, enabling Members to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Council's achievements, challenges and strategic priorities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee acknowledges the important role played by the Council in protecting consumer rights, resolving complaints, promoting consumer awareness and advocating for fair and transparent market practices. The review noted the Council's considerable achievements in complaint resolution, consumer education and policy advocacy, despite ongoing challenges relating to funding constraints, operational capacity and limited enforcement powers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the findings and recommendations contained in this Report seek to strengthen consumer protection mechanisms in Fiji through improved legislative support, enhanced operational resources, increased public awareness initiatives and stronger collaboration among relevant stakeholders. The Committee believes that these measures will contribute to a more effective consumer protection framework and improved outcomes for all Fijian consumers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I sincerely thank the Chief Executive Officer of the Consumer Council of Fiji and the Officials for their contribution to this review process. I am thankful to the honourable Members for their invaluable contribution and support during the review period.

I commend this Report to Parliament and trust that its findings and recommendations will assist in enhancing consumer welfare and strengthening consumer protection in Fiji.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move:

A motion, without notice, that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

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

MR. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

Review Report - Department of Information and National Archives 2023-2024 Annual Report

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Standing Committee on Social Affairs' Review Report on the Department of Information and National Archives' 2023-2024 Annual Report.

As part of the scrutiny process, the Committee received written responses from the Department of Information and National Archives. The process has proven to be an effective means of gauging its progress and maintaining a high level of scrutiny of the agency under review.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the 2023-2024 financial year, the Department of Information and Archives continued to position itself as the central agency for disseminating Government information, programmes and development initiatives. In strengthening this role, the Department implemented new methods of information dissemination, while reinforcing existing traditional platforms.

Some of the key highlights of the Department of Information during the review period were as follows:

- Event Coverage – a total of 1,003 events were covered, including the production of social media briefs, web uploads, photography, and radio programmes in both *iTaukei* and Hindi print publications.
- National Women's Expo, Exploring Outsourcing in Fiji Launch and Disaster Awareness week.
- Launch of the Fiji Sovereign Blue Bond, Girit Day, Ratu Sukuna Day and Fiji Ports \$15.6 million dividend announcement.
- Covered the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC) revitalisation, Installation of *Turaga na Vunivalu* of Bau and Head of Kubuna Confederacy.
- Election in Parliament of *Turaga Tui Cakau*, Hon. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu, as Speaker of Parliament.
- Coverage of New Zealand Prime Minister's visit to Fiji.
- Full coverage of the Cybersecurity Symposium, Indian Council for Cultural Relations Day and Fiji Day.
- Coverage of the opening of a new Ba Court Complex, World Forest Day and National Coconut Day event.

The Committee also noted some of the challenges faced by the National Archives of Fiji during consultation with the Officials and they are as follows:

- The Department of Information and National Archives does not have regular source of revenue as they are service providers to the people of Fiji.
- Delay in upgrading the IT Server at National Archives further delays the digitalisation of records.
- The Department is not adequately funded.

To conclude, I sincerely thank the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Information and National Archives and their Officials for their contribution to this review process. I am thankful to the honourable Members: honourable Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure, honourable Alipate Tuicolo, honourable Viam Pillay, honourable Alikia Bia, honourable Parveen Bala and honourable Ketan Lal, for their invaluable contribution and support.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this Report to Parliament.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move:

A motion, without notice, that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

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

MR. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

Review Report on the Sugar Industry Tribunal 2021 Annual Report

HON. S. TUBUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I am pleased to present the Review Report on the Sugar Industry Tribunal 2021 Annual Report. This Report reflects the Committee's examination of the Tribunal's performance, governance, accountability, financial management and service delivery, undertaken through its review of the Annual Report, oral and written submissions, stakeholder consultations, and site visits conducted throughout Fiji's sugar-producing regions.

The Sugar Industry Tribunal occupies an important role within Fiji's sugar industry as the statutory authority responsible for administering the Master Award, maintaining the Register of Growers, resolving disputes, overseeing grower-related matters, and promoting orderly relations amongst stakeholders within the industry. Through these functions, the Tribunal contributes to the effective administration of the sector and provides an important mechanism for safeguarding the rights and interests of sugarcane growers, while supporting stability within the industry.

In undertaking this review, the Committee adopted a comprehensive approach that extended beyond an assessment of the Annual Report itself. Consultations were held with the Tribunal, industry institutions, stakeholder representatives and sugarcane growers, while site visits enabled Members to obtain firsthand accounts of the challenges confronting the industry and evaluate the effectiveness of existing institutional arrangements. These engagements provided valuable insights into the realities faced by growers and the expectations placed on institutions responsible for supporting the sector.

The Committee acknowledges that during 2021, the Tribunal continued to discharge a number of its statutory responsibilities. The Tribunal oversaw matters associated with the commencement and conclusion of the crushing season, maintained records for 16,913 registered growers, processed grower registrations and transfers, administered registrations relating to ALTA-expired leases, resolved gang disputes, and continued to provide regulatory oversight of matters affecting the sugar industry. The Committee also notes the Tribunal's receipt of an unqualified audit opinion from the Office of the Auditor-General, reflecting compliance with applicable financial reporting requirements.

Notwithstanding these achievements, the Committee identified several significant issues requiring urgent attention. The Committee remains concerned by the continued delay in the submission of Annual Reports, with the 2021 Annual Report only submitted in December 2025, approximately four years after the reporting period. Such delays diminish transparency, weaken accountability, and impede effective parliamentary oversight.

The Committee is also concerned that several matters previously highlighted during the review of the Tribunal's 2016 to 2020 Annual Reports remain unresolved. These include the absence

of a centralised industry information management system, continued reliance on an outdated Master Award, and broader institutional challenges affecting service delivery and stakeholder confidence.

The Committee also notes concerns surrounding the outstanding receivable from the S.K. Trust and the need for greater transparency regarding the financial relationship between the Tribunal and the Trust. Furthermore, stakeholders repeatedly highlighted the need to modernise the legislative and regulatory framework governing the industry. The Committee is of the view that a comprehensive review of the Master Award, the Sugar Industry Act and associated institutional arrangements is necessary to ensure that the sector is supported by a governance framework that is efficient, accountable and responsive to contemporary challenges.

As Fiji's sugar industry continues to face declining cane production, labour shortages, increasing production costs, land tenure uncertainty, an ageing farming population and the need for greater innovation and diversification, the Committee believes that effective, accessible and accountable dispute resolution and regulatory mechanisms remain essential to maintaining confidence, fairness and stability within the sector. The recommendations contained in this Report seek to strengthen governance, improve institutional performance, enhance stakeholder confidence and support the long-term sustainability and resilience of Fiji's sugar industry.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions of my fellow Committee Members: honourable Premila Kumar, honourable Semi Koroilavesau, honourable Alipate Tuicolo and honourable Kalaveti Ravu, for their dedication and commitment throughout this review process.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I commend this Review Report to Parliament and respectfully urge all honourable Members of this august House to take note of its findings and recommendations.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. S. TUBUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move:

A motion, without notice, that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

MR. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

Review Report on the Ministry of Sugar Industry 2021-2022 Annual Report

HON. S. TUBUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I am pleased to present this Review Report of the Ministry of Sugar Industry 2021-2022 Annual Report. This Report reflects the Committee's assessment of the Ministry's performance, governance, accountability and service delivery, based on its examination of the Annual Report, written submissions, oral evidence, stakeholder consultations, and extensive site visits conducted throughout Fiji's major cane-growing areas.

In accordance with its mandate under the Standing Orders of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji, the Committee undertook a comprehensive review of the Ministry's operations, strategic priorities and policy interventions during the period under review. Particular attention was given to the Ministry's role in supporting, co-ordinating and facilitating the sustainable development of Fiji's sugar industry, while overseeing the implementation of Government-funded programmes, aimed at improving productivity, supporting growers, and strengthening the long-term viability of the sector.

The Committee acknowledges the Ministry's continued efforts to support the industry through a range of assistance programmes and strategic initiatives. During the 2021-2022 reporting period, the Ministry administered substantial Government support through the Sugar Stabilisation Fund, Fertiliser Subsidy Programme, Weedicide Subsidy Programme, Cane Cartage Programme, Cane Access Road Programme, and Sugarcane Development and Farmers Assistance Programme. These interventions provided essential support to growers and industry institutions during a period marked by economic uncertainty, climate-related disruptions, and ongoing structural challenges affecting the sector.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the Committee observed that the Fiji's sugar industry continues to face significant structural, operational and financial challenges. Evidence received throughout the review highlighted declining cane production, rising production costs, persistent labour shortages, ageing farming population, land tenure uncertainties, climate-related vulnerabilities, declining grower participation, and increasing pressure on the sustainability of the industry's institutional framework. The Committee further notes that despite substantial public investment and support measures, the desired improvements in productivity, profitability, and long-term sector resilience have yet to be fully realised.

As part of its review, the Committee travelled extensively across the Western and Northern Divisions and met directly with sugarcane farmers, grower representatives, industry institutions, and other key stakeholders. These consultations provided firsthand insight into the realities confronting growers and the wider industry. The Committee observed that concerns raised by farmers were consistently echoed across all cane-growing areas of Fiji. Growers highlighted the challenges posed by escalating harvesting, transportation, labour, fertiliser and farm input costs, while returns from sugarcane farming continue to decline. Stakeholders also raised concerns regarding labour shortages, an ageing farmer population, declining youth participation, land lease insecurity, rising lease renewal premiums, and the increasing difficulty of maintaining commercially viable farming operations under existing conditions.

The Committee is particularly concerned that uncertainty surrounding land tenure arrangements continues to undermine investment confidence and long-term planning within the industry. The Committee also notes growing concerns regarding the increasing conversion of productive agricultural land for industrial, commercial and residential developments, which may reduce the availability of land suitable for sugarcane farming and other agricultural uses.

The Committee further observed strong stakeholder support for a more modern, productive and diversified sugar industry. During consultations, stakeholders consistently emphasised the need to move beyond traditional sugar production and explore emerging opportunities in ethanol, sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), renewable energy, bioenergy generation and other value-added industries. The Committee considers these opportunities critical to creating new revenue streams, strengthening industry resilience, attracting investment and ensuring the long-term competitiveness of the sector.

The review also highlighted the importance of strengthening governance, accountability and coordination across industry institutions. Evidence received by the Committee pointed to concerns

regarding fragmented service delivery, overlapping responsibilities, limited information sharing and weak coordination among key stakeholders - the Ministry of Sugar Industry, Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji Sugar Corporation, Sugar Cane Growers Fund and Sugar Cane Growers Council.

The Committee's consultations with the Ministry and industry stakeholders further highlighted a number of important policy issues requiring continued attention, including mechanisation, farm consolidation, cane quality improvement, soil fertility management, climate resilience, youth participation, research and extension services, and the future implementation of the Cane Quality Payment System.

The Committee recognises the Ministry's efforts in addressing many of these priorities; however, sustained improvements in productivity, profitability and industry performance will require evidence-based policy development. The Committee also notes with concern the delays in the submission and scrutiny of Annual Reports and emphasises that timely reporting remains essential for maintaining transparency, accountability and effective Parliamentary oversight.

The findings and recommendations contained in this Report are intended to support the continued development, transformation and sustainability of Fiji's sugar industry. The Committee remains confident that through effective leadership, stronger institutional coordination, targeted policy reforms, improved governance, modernisation, diversification and sustained stakeholder engagement, Fiji's sugar industry can overcome its current challenges and continue to play a critical role in supporting economic growth, rural livelihoods, agricultural development and national prosperity.

I also acknowledge the valuable contributions of my fellow Committee Members: honourable Premila Kumar, honourable Semi Koroilavesau, honourable Alipate Tuicolo and honourable Kalaveti Ravu, for their support. On behalf of the Standing Committee on Economic Affairs, I commend this Review Report to Parliament and respectfully urge all honourable Members of this august House to take note of its findings and recommendations.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. S. TUBUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move:

A motion, without notice, that a debate on the content of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

MR. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

Review Report on the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2026

HON. RATU. R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is my pleasure to present the Committee's Report on the review of the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2026 (Bill No. 29/2026), that was referred to the Standing Committee to scrutinise and return a report of its findings to Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Bill seeks to amend the Electoral Act 2014 to modernise Fiji's electoral framework, improve voter participation, streamline electoral processes and introduce a revised system for electoral offences and penalties.

In carrying out its mandate, the Committee conducted a thorough examination of the Bill and carefully considered its implications on Fiji's democratic processes and electoral administration. The Committee undertook a clause-by-clause analysis of the proposed amendments and assessed their potential impact on voters, candidates, political parties, the Electoral Commission, and the Fijian Elections Office.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, particular attention was given to provisions relating to campaign regulations, postal voting, voter accessibility, electoral offences, and the powers and responsibilities of election management bodies.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee carefully examined the proposed amendments and noted that many of the changes are intended to make electoral laws more practical, accessible, and responsive to issues identified during electoral consultations and previous election experiences. The Bill also seeks to remove provisions that may unnecessarily restrict voter participation, while maintaining safeguards to protect the integrity of elections.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the significant changes is the reduction of the campaign boundary from 300 metres to 100 metres around polling stations. The Bill also removes the 48-hour campaign blackout period before polling day, and allows campaigning to continue up until polling day, subject to the restrictions provided in the Act and any limits determined by the Electoral Commission.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Bill expands access to voting by broadening the eligibility criteria for postal voting. Voters who are unable to attend their polling station due to family, work, or other significant commitments may now apply for postal voting. The Electoral Commission is also given discretion to approve additional grounds where necessary.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, another important amendment allows the use of assistive learning and speaking devices in polling stations. This ensures that people who rely on such devices are not prevented from voting and promote greater accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Bill introduces a new Section providing greater flexibility for pre-poll voting schedules. Where force majeure events, requests from communities, or operational difficulties arise, the Supervisor of Elections may vary the schedule, provided transparent notification procedures are followed. This amendment strengthens the ability of election officials to respond to unforeseen circumstances, while maintaining public confidence in the process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee acknowledged that Bill generally seeks to improve electoral participation, accessibility and administrative efficiency. The amendments also strengthen transparency, create greater flexibility in election management, and establish clearer penalties for electoral misconduct.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, however, some provisions generated differing views among Members, particularly, those relating to campaign restrictions, transportation and refreshments for voters, and the removal of the 48-hour blackout period. These differing perspectives reflected concerns about balancing voter convenience and participation with the need to preserve electoral integrity and prevent undue influence. Nevertheless, all views were carefully considered throughout the Committee's deliberations.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights for their deliberations and input. For sitting in as an Alternate Member, I thank the honourable Salen Kumar for contributing to the Committee's deliberations as well.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I, on behalf of the Committee, commend the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2026 (Bill No. 29/2026), to Parliament and seek support of all the Members of this august House for the Bill.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, pursuant to the resolution of Parliament on Friday, 21st August, 2026, the Standing Committee has tabled its Report, and the Bill will be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 1st October, 2026.

We will pause here for our morning tea break. Honourable Members, we will suspend our proceedings, and Parliament will resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.34 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.15 a.m.

Review Report on the Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Bill 2026

HON. RATU. R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to present the Standing Committee's second report, which is the Review of the Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Bill 2026 (Bill No. 30 of 2026). The Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights in August of this year.

At the outset, the Bill seeks to amend the Electoral (Registration of Voters) Act 2012 to align with the reforms proposed under the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2026 and strengthen the legal framework governing voter registration and electoral integrity in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee noted that the Bill introduces new definitions for “corrupt electoral practice”, “illegal electoral practice” and the “Corrupt Electoral Practices List”. These amendments, Sir, provide consistency across Fiji's electoral legislation and support the new framework for electoral offences established under the Electoral Act 2014. The Committee considered that a harmonised legislative framework would improve clarity, enforcement and public understanding of electoral laws.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill also amends provisions relating to voter eligibility by replacing the term “have a mental disorder” with “be of unsound mind” to align the wording with terminology currently used in the Constitution. The Committee noted that this amendment is intended to ensure consistency in legal language across Fiji's electoral laws and administrative processes.

The Committee further noted the amendment to section 12 of the Act, which requires the removal of the National Register of Voters of any person who has been entered on the Corrupt Electoral Practices List or otherwise disqualified from the voter registration under electoral laws. The Committee considered that this amendment strengthens the integrity of the voter registration system by ensuring that people found guilty of serious electoral misconduct are temporarily prevented from participating in the electoral process during their period of disqualification.

Mr. Speaker, a significant amendment contained in the Bill is the insertion of the new section 19G, which establishes the Corrupt Electoral Practices List. The Committee noted that the Supervisor of Elections will be required to record the details of persons who, within the previous four years, have been convicted of a corrupt electoral practice or have been reported by the Court of Disputed Returns as guilty of a corrupt electoral practice or a Category A offence under the Electoral (Local Government Elections) Regulations 2026.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee considered that this provides a transparent and accountable mechanism for administering electoral disqualifications while ensuring that the names are automatically removed from the list after four years, thereby, restoring electoral rights once the prescribed period has expired. The Bill also amends several offence provisions by categorising them as illegal electoral practices rather than prescribing separate penalties within the Act. The Committee noted that this approach provides a clearer and more streamlined enforcement regime for electoral offences.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable Members of the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee for their deliberations. And, Sir, on behalf of the Committee, I commend the Electoral (Registration of Voters) (Amendment) Bill 2026 (Bill No. 30 of 2026), to Parliament and seek support of all the Members of this august House.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, pursuant to the resolution of Parliament on Friday, 21st August, 2026, the Standing Committee has tabled its Report, and the Bill will be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 1st October, 2026.

Review Report on the Political Parties
(Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) (Amendment) Bill 2026

HON. RATU R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Speaker, it is with a great pleasure that I table the third Report of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights review of the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) (Amendment) Bill 2026 (Bill No. 31 of 2026).

Mr. Speaker, the Bill seeks to amend the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act 2013 to incorporate recommendations from Multinational Observer Group Reports, align the Act with proposed electoral reforms and strengthen the framework governing political party funding, campaign expenditure and disclosures in Fiji.

The Committee noted that the Bill introduces the definitions of “corrupt electoral practice” and “illegal electoral practice” to ensure consistency with the amendments proposed under the Electoral Act 2014. The Committee considered that having uniform definitions across electoral legislation strengthens public understanding of electoral offences and their consequences.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee further noted that a number of existing offences under the Act have been reclassified as either corrupt electoral practice or illegal electoral practices. The Committee considered that this amendment supports the introduction of a more structured and proportionate framework for electoral offences.

Mr. Speaker, a significant amendment contained in the Bill relates to political donations. The Bill removes the existing limit on donations that may be received by political parties and candidates and permits non-Fiji citizens and former Fiji citizens to make donations. However, such donations must be declared to the Registrar within 60 days after polling day and the Registrar is required to publish the declarations on the Registrar's website. The Committee noted that this approach seeks to balance greater participation in the democratic process with transparency and public accountability through disclosure requirements.

The Committee also noted the introduction of campaign expenditure limits aimed at creating a level playing field for political parties and candidates. Under the Bill, a candidate must not spend more than \$300,000 on an election campaign, while a political party must not spend more than \$3 million during the prescribed campaign period. The expenditure limits also include income pledged or expenditure incurred outside the campaign period if intended for use during the campaign.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill further requires all candidates whether elected or not to submit information to the Registrar within 60 days after polling day detailing campaign income, donations received, sources of donations and campaign expenditure. The Committee noted that this requirement strengthens transparency and accountability by enabling more comprehensive monitoring of campaign financing and candidate expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee also noted that the Bill clarifies that gifts provided by candidates or political parties to villages or community groups solely for the purpose of obtaining customary permission to enter a community must be declared and included within campaign expenditure disclosures. Where properly declared, such gifts will not constitute bribery under the Electoral Act

2014. The Committee considered that this amendment recognises cultural protocols while maintaining transparency over campaign-related expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, again I would like to thank the honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights. On behalf of the Committee, I commend the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) (Amendment) Bill 2026 (Bill No. 31 of 2026), to Parliament and seek support of honourable Members of this august House.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, pursuant to the resolution of Parliament on Friday, 21st August, 2026, the Standing Committee has tabled its Report, and the Bill will be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 1st October, 2026.

Review Report on the National Referendum Bill 2025

HON. RATU. R.S.S. VAKALALABURE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to table the last Report from the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, the Review Report on the National Referendum Bill 2025 (Bill No. 46 of 2025).

Mr. Speaker, the Committee undertook a detailed review of the National Referendum Bill 2025 and proposed several amendments to strengthen the practicality, transparency, inclusiveness, and administrative effectiveness of the referendum framework. The Committee noted that while the Bill establishes the legal basis for conducting referendums in Fiji, a number of provisions required refinement to ensure that the process is clear, accessible to voters, and capable of being administered efficiently by electoral authorities.

One of the key amendments clarified that registered voters who are outside Fiji during a referendum remain entitled to vote. The Committee considered that many Fijian citizens reside, study, work, or travel overseas and should not be denied the opportunity to participate in decisions of national importance solely because they are temporarily absent from the country. This amendment promotes inclusiveness by ensuring that all eligible voters are able to exercise their democratic rights irrespective of their location.

Mr. Speaker, another key change included extending the referendum period from the originally proposed timeframe to a period of not less than 30 days and not more than 45 days after the issue of the writ. This, Sir, allows ample time for logistical requirements that is associated with voter education, overseas voting arrangements and electoral preparations.

The Committee also introduced provisions establishing a framework for the issuance of a referendum writ. Under the amendment, the President is required to issue a writ upon notification by the Speaker of Parliament, with the writ setting out key details such as the voting day, referendum question, closure of the voter register, and return of the writ. The Committee considered this amendment necessary to provide legal certainty, clearly define institutional responsibilities between the Electoral Commission and the Office of His Excellency the President, and ensure that voters are provided with sufficient information regarding the referendum process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on public awareness, the Committee amended the Bill to require the publication of referendum details and constitutional amendment proposals, together with summaries of parliamentary debates relating to the proposed changes. The Committee noted that constitutional issues are often complex and that voters should have access to impartial and comprehensive information before casting their vote. The publication of explanatory materials would, therefore,

support voter education and informed decision-making for our voters.

The amendments also provide practical arrangements for referendums conducted concurrently with a general election. The Committee recognised that holding separate national polling events would involve significant costs and logistical challenges. Accordingly, the Bill permits the shared use of electoral officials, polling venues, ballot boxes, and voter lists while maintaining safeguards such as distinct ballot papers and separate counting procedures. The Committee considered these measures to be both cost-effective and administratively efficient while preserving the integrity of both electoral processes.

With respect to voting procedures, the Committee amended the Bill to provide a simple and straightforward method of voting by allowing voters to tick, cross, or circle either “Yes” or “No” on the ballot paper. The Committee was of the view that a clear binary choice would reduce voter confusion and ensure that referendum outcomes accurately reflect the wishes of the registered voters. The standardised ballot paper format prescribed in the Schedule of the amended Bill was also intended to improve consistency and facilitate efficient vote counting.

The Committee further amended the Bill to allow multiple referendum questions to be printed on a single ballot paper. This amendment was considered particularly beneficial where more than one constitutional issue is presented to voters at the same time. The Committee noted that such an approach would reduce printing at administrative costs while ensuring that a mistake relating to one question would not automatically invalidate a voter's response to another question.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to referendum results, the Committee strengthened the process of tabulating, certifying and declaring outcomes. The amendments require the Supervisor of Elections to prepare the national results, which must then be endorsed by the Electoral Commission before being transmitted to His Excellency the President for final declaration. The Committee considered that these additional layers of scrutiny provide for transparency, accountability and public confidence.

The Committee also recognised the need for an effective regulatory framework to support the implementation of the Act. Amendments were therefore made to empower the Minister and Electoral Commission to make regulations and rules concerning voter education, referendum campaign, public meetings, campaign finance and dispute resolution.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Committee introduced provisions on the retention and destruction of referendum records. The amendments require records to be retained for six months before destruction unless otherwise ordered by a court. The Committee considered that this period provides sufficient time for legal challenges or investigations to be pursued while also protecting confidential electoral information and reducing long-term storage and administrative burdens.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Committee, I extend my appreciation to all individuals and organisations that contributed to the review process of the Referendum Bill. I would also like to thank Members of the Committee, the Office of the Solicitor-General, the Supervisor of Elections, the Electoral Chairperson, and anyone else who had participated in the National Referendum Bill.

On behalf of the Committee, I commend the National Referendum Bill (Bill No. 46 of 2025), to Parliament and 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

Thursday, 4th December, 2025, the Standing Committee has now tabled its Report, and the Bill will be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 1st October, 2026.

Before we proceed to the next item on our agenda, I would like to address the Law students from the University of the South Pacific. I am glad you have remained with us. It is important for you to understand how Bills are enacted and come before Parliament.

In your law studies, you will be required to find the reason and the content of a law that you are studying, so I think this is a very rare opportunity for you to look and hear the mover of a Bill coming forward with the reasons and logic behind a Bill. When you understand the law in your studies, you will get to know the meaning of legal provisions that are in that law, by not only going through what they normally call (and the lawyers in here will share with you), the explanatory notes that follow the Bill that explain, to some extent, the meaning and the intent of the Bill, but even more so now hearing from the mover of the motion to explain why they have come to the provisions of this Bill in the way they have done. Bear that in mind.

It is a privilege, I am sure, for you to be here while they are discussing, especially the important aspects of the electoral laws of Fiji.

Honourable Members, I have been advised that the two Ministerial Statements for today have been withdrawn.

QUESTIONS

Oral Questions

Weather Data Network for Parametric Insurance (Question No. 195/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport inform Parliament whether Fiji's existing weather data network is sufficiently reliable, geographically representative and independently verifiable to support the wider use of parametric insurance?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for this important question. Fiji's existing weather data network provides sufficiently reliable foundation to support the continued development and wider use of parametric insurance. However, further strengthening of the network is required, particularly in terms of geographic coverage across remote and maritime areas.

Given Fiji's dispersed geographical setting, we recognise the need to progressively increase the number and distribution of meteorological observation stations. A denser network will localise weather information, address existing data gaps, and reduce the risk of differences between actual losses experienced and the weather parameters used to trigger insurance payouts.

On data reliability, the Fiji Meteorological Services provides historical and real-time meteorological data to support the operation of parametric insurance products. The monitoring and tracking of tropical cyclones, including their location, track, and wind characteristics is supported by FMS observations together with satellite radar and other meteorological information. This provides a strong basis for insurance products that use predetermined cyclone-related parameters as payout

triggers.

However, there are challenges with highly localised rainfall observations, particularly where equipment may experience technical faults or communication interruptions during severe weather. This may contribute to what is known as basis risk, where a policyholder suffers significant damage, but the observation recorded at the relevant station does not reach the predetermined threshold required to trigger a payout. Improving the resilience and density of our observation network will therefore help to minimise this risk.

Geographic coverage is the main area that requires further strengthening. The existing network provides relatively good coverage across Viti Levu, particularly, around the major population, commercial, and agricultural centres. Coverage in Vanua Levu is progressively improving, although expansion has faced challenges relating to the availability of suitable land for station installations, communication and connectivity issues, and budgetary constraints. The Ministry through the Meteorological Services is continuing to address these matters.

There is a need for improved observational coverage across remote and maritime areas in Lau, Kadavu, Lomaiviti, and other remote areas of Vanua Levu. The continued expansion of Automated Weather Stations (AWS) into these underserved areas will improve the geographical representation of weather data and ensure that parametric insurance products can operate in these areas effectively and efficiently.

On independent verifiability, the framework also provides for independent verification. The Meteorological Services is the primary provider, while Weather Risk Management Services (WRMS) based in India, serves as an external index monitoring agent. The arrangements involving the Reserve Bank of Fiji, the Fiji Meteorological Services, and WRMS provide separation between the provision of meteorological observations and the monitoring of the index used to determine whether the relevant parameter trigger has been reached.

In summary, Fiji has a credible meteorological data network to support the wider development of parametric insurance. The reliability of the core weather data and the independent verification arrangements provide a sound foundation. However, with the limitations, as I have already mentioned, the Fiji Meteorological Services continues to work on improving.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, that question was raised because the Committee has have been looking at the RBF Insurance Report. Through our analysis, it has come out pretty clear that we are selling a product called parametric insurance cover, but then we do not have the weather data network throughout the country. That means, we are selling a product, but we cannot provide the data. Therefore, the insured people are missing out, and it is not fair. My question here would be, is there any plan to make sure that we have this weather data network throughout the country, and at the same time, it should be of a particular standard, not that we look at the hearsay information and we leave it to the insurance companies to make the decision?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned, I have already explained the challenges, but weather service is working on that to improve, to ensure the gaps mentioned are applied. I was at the Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Meteorology and there is currently a 10-year weather-ready programme with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). It is also a programme to improve what we have been discussing, especially remote weather monitoring, and also various infrastructures that will be upgraded as we move through this 10-year programme.

MR. SPEAKER.- I did not read the bottom line of this question, which is supposed to be

answered by the honourable Prime Minister who is not here. I acknowledge that he is, otherwise, engaged. We will defer this question to a later time today.

Construction of Incinerator at Rotuma Hospital
(Question No. 197/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services update Parliament whether there are plans to construct an incinerator at the Rotuma Hospital?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the short answer to the question is, yes. The Ministry does have plans to ensure that there are incinerator capabilities in most of its subdivisional hospitals, and Rotunda is also included in that plan. For the time being, the Rotuma Subdivisional Hospital has its own waste management plan where feasible waste from the island's hospital is transported to the Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) incinerator in Rotuma for destruction. If BAF's incinerator is utilised, the Health Team provides fuel to BAF to support the incineration process. Other than that, general waste or non-hazardous waste from the hospital and health centre is transported to the local community dump for disposal.

Currently, we have plans for incinerators at Naboro, Sigatoka, Rakiraki, Taveuni and Kadavu. The plan is to have all subdivisional hospitals with their own incinerator capability.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Can the honourable Minister give a timeframe by when the incinerator will be constructed?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- As I have said, the priority is the facilities that I have mentioned. After those facilities are done, then we can move onto Rotuma and other facilities that do not have incinerator capabilities.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, honourable Minister. I am glad to see that in the absence of the incinerator in Rotuma, you do have BAF to be able to handle the clinical and hazardous waste. I am wondering, in hospitals where you do not have incinerators and you do not have BAF, how is it that you treat clinical and hazardous waste?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Those are done through requests and partnerships with organisations that have incinerators. Sir, Aspen has just recently commissioned their new incinerator in the West. Other than that, for areas that do not have incinerators, especially for hazardous waste, they are transported to areas where we can facilitate the utilisation of proper disposal of medical waste through incinerators.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- The honourable Minister has very clearly stated that the intention is to build incinerators around the country. I would like to know whether any costing has been done for such work or whether you have got any approval from the Ministry of Finance?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- For Naboro Landfill, the construction of the incinerator and building has been completed. Installation of the incinerator unit is pending approval, valuation as requested by the supplier.

For Sigatoka Hospital, the EIA assessment was approved in the previous financial year and funding for the construction of the incinerator and procurement of the incinerator unit will be for this financial year.

For Rakiraki Hospital, the project is currently in the EIA phase. The Environmental Management Plan for Taveuni Hospital and Kadavu Hospital have been approved by the Department of Environment and provision to be applied in the financial year based on the prerequisites.

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just wanted to know, is there another power supply to run all medical equipment, including the incinerator in Rotuma?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Sir, can he repeat the question?

MR. SPEAKER.- Can you slow down a bit?

HON. V. LAL.- Sir, my question is, is there another power supply to run all medical equipment, including the incinerator in Rotuma?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- From the information that I have received, it is just the BAF incinerator. If we do use their incinerator, then we will do it on a cost-sharing basis in terms of providing fuel.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we will go back to the second Oral Question since the honourable Prime Minister is here

National Academy for Public Administration of Serbia and FLIPS
(Question No. 196/2026)

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

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Service, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, and Public Enterprises update Parliament on the Memorandum of Cooperation between the National Academy for Public Administration of the Republic of Serbia and the Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS) of the Republic of Fiji?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, may, I, first of all, apologise for returning late. I had to accommodate a group of Heads of Christian denominations that wanted to come and see me this morning.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers, honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, also addressing the young law students who are here with us this morning; the question is on the Memorandum of Cooperation that we have entered into with the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA) of the Republic of Serbia and the Fiji Learning Institute for Public Service (FLIPS) here in Fiji, which is intended to strengthen cooperation and public administration, governance and professional development.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable Members know that Serbia, one of those new republicans that were formed after the breakup of the Soviet Union, but they had been independent since 1976. We have had a relationship with Serbia since 1976. Some of our peacekeepers had to go to Kosovo when they had their cross-border fighting, when Kosovo was fighting for their independence.

Mr. Speaker, the public service, the training and the quality of the civil service and civil servants will come from the opportunity we give the civil servants to develop in their own professions. This proposed cooperation will provide an opportunity for Fiji and Serbia to exchange

knowledge, experience and good practices in public administration. It will also strengthen institutional links between NAPA and FLIPS.

This is the reality in the world now. We hang on to or we develop relationships with friendly nations around us and even those further abroad. In our defense and in our security arrangements, this has been a feature of new colonial developments. This proposed cooperation will provide opportunities for Fiji and Serbia to exchange knowledge, experience and good practices.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this cooperation will cover the exchange of information and expertise, professional development programmes, organisational capacity, our capacity building and joint initiatives of mutual interest. It will be of interest to us that we have also recently acknowledged the independence of Kosovo. In the previous administration, we recognised the independence of Kosovo from Serbia in 2008.

This cooperation will also provide flexibility for both institutions, the benefit for Fiji, Mr. Speaker, the value of that partnership will ultimately be measured by what it delivers for Fiji. It will support the professional development of our public servants and provide access to international experience in governance, public policy and public administration. It will also strengthen FLIPS as an institution for developing the skills and capabilities required for modern and future-ready public service.

Our public service must be able to respond to changing economic, social, and technological conditions. We, therefore, need continuous learning, stronger institutions, and a workforce that is equipped to deliver better outcomes for our people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji and Serbia have maintained a diplomatic relationship since 1976. Both governments made a firm commitment in 2025 to deepen engagement and expand cooperation in areas of mutual interest. This proposed memorandum gives practical expression to that commitment.

Fiji's Foreign Policy is grounded on partnerships, trust, and mutual respect. Our own regional and spirit of the *vuvale* or family guides how we build relationships with our international partners. Our bilateral relationships are strengthened through practical cooperation and this partnership between NAPA and FLIPS is one such example. It creates people-to-people connections and allows our institutions to learn from each other. It also supports Fiji's broader ambition to strengthen our role as a trusted Pacific partner and a regional centre for investment, cooperation and capacity development.

Looking ahead, Mr. Speaker, Fiji has completed its domestic approval requirements and is ready to proceed. Serbia is currently finalizing its internal processes. The proposed cooperation reflects Fiji's commitment to building partnerships that strengthen our institutions and develop our people. For government, this is not simply an exchange between two training institutions. It is an investment in the capability of the Public Service.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a strong and professional public service is fundamental to good governance, effective policy implementation and national development. As Fiji looks to the future, we must continue to build institutions that are capable, resilient, accountable and responsive to the needs of our people. This partnership with Serbia is a practical step in that direction.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Prime Minister for his answer. Just a quick question, when NAPA was formed, one of its core objectives was also to look at the depoliticization of the Civil Service. With this memorandum that we are signing, will that also form a core part? Is it in the memorandum or is that also going to be looked at because I think they have

done it quite well?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Depoliticization of the Civil Service?

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Yes, Sir.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Ever since the colonial days, Fiji has attempted to depoliticise the Civil Service, but the reality of the situation is that the senior members selected for the Public Service Commission, et cetera, have political leanings and we, as a sitting Government, will have to make sure that they do not. We may even recommend or make our own recommendations. It is up to FLIPS to train them to such a standard that regardless of your political alignment, you should be a servant for the people, professionally capable of serving the people you have been called to serve.

HON. H. CHAND.- Thank you, honourable Prime Minister for the response. My question is, what financial commitments has the Fiji Government undertaken under the memorandum including travel, accommodation and training costs?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- That will be dealt with when we get to the finer details of the cooperation. However, for funding and at what level, that will come back to us in Parliament because we will have to approve the budget, et cetera.

Measures to Modernise/Strengthen Fiji's Valuation Framework
(Question No. 198/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources update Parliament on the measures being undertaken by Government to modernise and strengthen Fiji's valuation framework, including professional regulation and alignment with internationally recognised valuation standards?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am happy to provide the answer to the question that has been asked by honourable Ravu this morning. You will find throughout the thread of the answer that I will provide to the House that the principle of valuation that we are proposing is not just a technical footnote to the economic story of our country.

I would further propose, Mr. Speaker, that valuation really is part of the foundational proponents of a nation's economy because valuation determines what land is worth, it determines what Government collects through Capital Gains Tax, it determines what banks would lend, and valuation determines what families can borrow or gains, what landowners receive and what investors can trust. If we get valuation right, then the whole system of our nation's economy can work. If we get it wrong or get it outdated, then every transaction, assessment, valuation and dispute carries a cost that ordinary Fijians will have to pay.

Valuation, Mr. Speaker, is, indeed, an integral part of the economic infrastructure of our country, and it needs to be treated as such. Fiji currently regulates the valuation profession through the Valuers Registration Act 1986. That Act establishes the Valuation Registration Board, it provides for the registration of valuers that provides for their conduct and governance, and it provides for discipline. That was the right framework for 1986.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we would all appreciate that our property markets have changed, our financial sector has changed as well, and our land administration has also changed. Our valuation

profession has changed, but its legislation has not.

For the law, we understand, Mr. Speaker, falls behind the market, and the market does not wait. It simply improvises, and that would mean that the standards will flip and inconsistencies creep in. We had discovered that many years ago with property price speculations and, with it, public confidence goes. A thing that makes any property market function simply disappears.

So, the Government, Mr. Speaker, has begun the process of promoting the review of the framework that deals with valuation and we have started that comprehensively. We are working towards a dedicated modern valuation law for Fiji.

I am pleased to advise this House today that on 22nd September, 2026, Cabinet has approved to endorse the entire overhaul of our valuation law. What would it entail, Mr. Speaker, Sir?

- (1) We are proposing to strengthen the registration and regulation of valuers, providing for proper educational requirements; demonstrated competency; practical experience; and continued professional development, like we have with lawyers and medical practitioners, not as a formality but as a statutory standard. I see that my friend, the Valuer on the other side, has not turned up to the House in the last two days.
- (2) We are strengthening the professional and ethical standards that values these needs - clear mechanisms for complaints, investigations, disciplinary actions and accountability, so if someone practices badly, there must be consequences.
- (3) In the proposed new valuation regime of the country, we are going to be promoting consistency, transparency and independence in valuation practice, particularly, where valuations are done for Government, for financial institutions, for land transactions, for acquisitions, for municipal ratings and for other statutory purposes. Where the public interest is engaged, we must understand that there is a higher bar to meet.
- (4) Adopting internationally recognised valuation standards, including the International Valuation Standards Barometer. Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to be clear about this point. Aligning with international standards is not just about us going abroad and importing someone else's rules, however, we want to create credibility within our own system, and it is about giving Fiji's valuation standing in the international markets. It is about making sure that when the Fijian asset is valued, the number is trusted, both here and abroad.
- (5) We are strengthening the governance and institutional capacity of the valuers' registration.
- (6) We are improving the valuation data, something that honourable Kirpal has often required of me and my office. We have continuously upgraded the data centre to be market evidence and technologically capable. It just simply means that better data provided for at the data centre means that there will be better valuation and better outcomes.
- (7) Ensure that this framework properly recognises Fiji's very distinctive land tenure arrangements - iTaukei land, State land and Freehold land. One size does not fit all. Our regulatory framework must reflect who we are and what those different land tenure distinctions mean.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, there are three objectives – we are:

- (1) modernising governance, a contemporary framework that strengthens professional

- regulations and accountability.
- (2) building trust, greater consistency and transparency in every valuation done and in the entire valuation practice, so that the public can have confidence in the number that is thrown out in the valuation report.
 - (3) supporting the economic growth of our country. A regulatory system that supports Fiji's future land and economic development rather than one that holds it back.

Mr. Speaker, let me say how we will do it. We will consult, like how we, this Government, have done consistently in the last three and a half years. We will be active and we will be genuine with the Valuers Registration Board and even with registered valuers; with financial and professional bodies; with relevant Government agencies; with the landowners; and with everyone who has a stake in this entire pie. Reform that is imposed, we understand, Mr. Speaker, rarely lasts, but reform that is built with the people it affects, are reforms that endures.

Mr. Speaker, the Coalition Government remains committed to strengthening the valuation governance in Fiji and our goal is straightforward - the valuation regulatory framework that is fit for purpose, professionally accountable and transparent, and responsive to the country's future land and economic development pathway. Fiji's land is amongst the greatest not only in the Pacific, but throughout the world, and it deserves a valuation system that measures it very honestly, very consistently, and to a standard that the world will recognise. That is what we are building, Sir.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his detailed response to that question. Valuation data is extremely crucial for buyers and sellers of properties. When you are selling your property, you want to make sure that you get a fair value for it. When you are buying a property, the same thing applies.

My question here is on the valuation data. Is the valuation data available to the Real Estate Agents Licensing Board (REALB)? What I am saying that is because there was a plan to make all properties that are there on the property market that are sold, or on the verge of being sold, to be placed in one single site, as we have in Australia and New Zealand – the real estate site where anyone who is buying or selling can look at the price and make an informed decision.

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a repository of sales data is maintained at the Chief Valuer's Office, and we sign with each of the valuation companies that wants to have access to those data. I think, within the greater framework of the new law being passed, there would be mechanisms and regulations built around that data becoming a public document. However, there is nothing that stops anyone who wants to have a view, if they are buying a house in Namadi and they want to see comparative analysis of house pricing around them, they are more than welcome to find those details. It is not a complete data repository at the moment; it is a work in progress. It has been built with the assistance of those who voluntarily deposit their sales.

We are also working with the Office of the Registrar of Titles because that is where all these documents, ultimately, end up. Sales and purchase documents are deposited there, and our Ministry picks up all this information and fits it into the repository. We then provide that information, at a fee, to valuation companies. As I have said, it is a work in progress, but moving forward, it can become a very important tool that people can make decisions on. They can look at it and decide whether or not to buy.

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

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Yes, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I wanted to understand more about the fee, particularly, the fee that you charge for an individual consumer who wants to get that report, against

the fee that is charged to an institution, such as the REALB.

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not privy to the exact amount. They are nominal fees. I understand that fees are charged to valuation companies. For example, if honourable Kirpal's company signs an MOU with the Chief Valuer's Office, that MOU (I think) contains a fee but if there were such fees that would be applied to a private citizen, I would assume that the fee would be very nominal.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister and welcome his efforts, after what Parliament debated yesterday on the FFIU Report and how importance it is. Honourable Minister, what specific safeguards are you considering putting in place to stop the bribery and collusion in land valuations? You also spoke about the consequences of professional misconduct. Can you elaborate to the House whether they get disciplined, suspended, deregistered, or even cases go up to FICAC?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, many platforms, indeed, that exist. There are those that borders on criminality, and then it becomes the domain of the Police. However, for people who feel that valuers, for example, have not done a good work, or have not really met the standard, or are not happy with how it is done, then the Valuers Registration Board is where they will take their complaint.

The complaint is going to be handled in a manner where there is natural justice involved. So, anyone who wants to complain against any of the valuers, if they are willing, they come, they lodge their complaint, the complaint will be forwarded to the valuer and the valuer will have to respond. If they do not respond, then there is a sanction. However, if they respond and there is a hearing, and they find a lack of standard on the valuer then, of course, there are some penalties that are imposed.

As I have said, Mr. Speaker, this is a 1986 Act of Parliament, which needs to be reviewed because everything else has evolved, except the law that provides the environment for its use. There is a present regulatory and governance procedure, but that needs to be upgraded.

Current Operational Efficiency of FSC Mills
(Question No. 199/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar Industry update Parliament on the current operational efficiency of the Fiji Sugar Corporation Mills for this crushing season, specifically, regarding metrics on cut-to-crush delays and the measures being implemented to improve sugar recovery rates?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to respond to the honourable Member's question. I wish to advise this august House that based on the operational performance recorded on 21st September, 2026, the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) Mills have generally performed well compared to previous crushing seasons. There have been improvements in mill reliability, a substantial reduction in mill downtime, maintenance and repair at the mills, and improved sugar recovery and better cane quality. These improvements are contributing to increased sugar production from the cane being processed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, by FSC definition, an inside stop refers to a planned stoppage of the mill to undertake scheduled maintenance and repairs. This stoppage forms an integral schedule of the mills' maintenance programme and are necessary to maintain reliability, operational efficiency and overall

performance of the factory. In some instances, particularly due to age of the machinery, unplanned stoppage may also be required to address urgent repair needs. However, such occurrences have been less frequent during the current harvesting season.

Secondly, an outside stop, by contrast, occurs when the mills are required to cease operation due to an inadequate supply of cane for crushing. Therefore, outside stops are directly associated with cane availability, harvesting operations, transportation, logistics, and the timely delivery of harvested cane to the factory.

Another important performance indicator is the Tonne of Cane to Tonnes of Sugar (TCTS) ratio, which is commonly used in sugar mills operations. This ratio indicates the quality of cane required to produce one tonne of sugar. A lower TCTS ratio reflects improved sugar recovery efficiency, so less cane is required to produce each tonne of sugar.

As at 21st September 2026, the operational performance of the three Mills reflects notable improvement compared to the 2025 crushing season.

- (1) At the Lautoka Mill, after 10 weeks of crushing, the –
 - (i) weekly average of inside stops was 14.3 hours, compared to 26.6 hours in 2026. This represents a significant reduction in the Mill downtime, associated with maintenance and repair.
 - (ii) weekly average for outside stops was 55.2 hours, compared to 28.9 hours in 2025. This indicates that cane supply to the Mill remains an area requiring continued attention.
 - (iii) To date, TCTS ratio was 11.4, compared to 16 in 2025. This represents a substantial improvement in sugar recovery with significantly less cane required to produce one tonne of sugar.

Therefore, the reduction in the inside stops at the Lautoka Mill, coupled with the improvement of the TCTS ratio, demonstrates a significant enhancement in the Mill's operational performance and sugar recovery compared to the previous season.

- (2) After 12 weeks of crushing at the Rarawai Mill, the
 - (i) weekly average for inside stops was 15.4 hours, compared to 83.5 hours in 2025. This represents a substantial reduction in Mill breakdown time.
 - (ii) weekly average for outside stops was 15.1 hours, compared to 28.1 hours in 2025.
 - (iii) To date, TCTS ratio was 11.3, compared to 13.9 in 2025, indicating improved sugar recovery.
- (3) Performance at Rarawai Mill is particularly encouraging, following the devastating fire incident last year. The improved TCTS ratio, demonstrated enhanced mill reliability, overall operational conditions, and sugar recovery.
- (4) At the Labasa Mill, after 12 weeks of crushing, the –
 - (i) weekly average for inside stops was 6.3 hours, compared to 5.9 hours in 2025.
 - (ii) weekly average for outside stops was 38.3, compared to 42.7 in 2025.
 - (iii) To date, TCTS ratio was 9.1, compared to last year in 2025.

Although the Labasa Mill inside stops are slightly higher than last season, the Mill continued to maintain very low overall maintenance and repair downtime, while the reduction in outside stocks improvement in the TCTS ratio indicates an advanced sugar

recovery from cane proceeds.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, collectively, this results particularly in comparison with the strong performance recorded during 2025 crushing season are encouraging. This means that across all the three Mills, less cane is now required to produce one tonne of sugarcane, compared to the corresponding 2025 performances.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the field and harvesting level, FSC is also taking measures to improve cane quality and timely supply of cane to the Mills through continued engagement with growers and relevant stakeholders to discourage the burning of cane, and daily monitoring of harvesting operation by FSC field staff.

The Government recognises that improving mill efficiency is not only about reducing the mechanical downtime, but it also requires a reliable supply of good quality cane, effective harvesting, efficient transportation, and reducing the period between cutting and crushing. The 2026 season is, therefore, showing encouraging improvement across all of these areas.

The Government remains committed to working closely with FSC, sugarcane growers, harvesting gangs, transport operators and all other industry stakeholders, to sustain this improvement and further minimise delays, enhance sugar recovery and strengthen the overall efficiency performance for the long-term sustainability of the sugar industry.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker Sir, apart from the improvements, as the honourable Minister has said, we still go through a number of breakdowns and unplanned stoppages, especially for Ba and Lautoka Mills, which is affecting harvesting. We all are aware of the severe drought that farmers are facing in the Western Division. Further to the work that has been done, honourable Minister, what other improvements can be done to minimise these stoppages at Ba and Lautoka Mills?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, I did mention about the efficiencies we have had this year, an improvement of what we had last year, and I did mention the close coordination of the work being carried out from harvesting to the Mill and we would strengthen that close coordination of activities so that we minimise the downtime and the inefficiencies of the Mills. However, as I have mentioned, we had a marked increase in all the three indicators that I had just mentioned.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I agree with the honourable Minister that when it comes to the Government Guarantee Grant to the FSC, it is divided between operational loss and mill upgrade that becomes a challenge. My question to the honourable Minister is, if his Ministry is considering knocking on the doors of our donor partners, or to be able to get concessional loans in terms of getting our Mills upgraded, because if we can access funds for our waterways, or for our village relocations, why can we not access funds for our Mill upgrades? Are there conversations that your Ministry is going to do so?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we had earlier indicated in this House that we now have a study being undertaken by the European Union, and they are going to identify to us how we are going to take the sugar industry forward, which will include the committee looking back at the FAO Report and the consultation which was conducted earlier this year that will provide us with information on how we are going to move the sugar industry forward, which may include some of what had just been asked.

Transformative Impacts of High-Risk Water Programme
(Question No. 200/2026)

HON. A.N. TUICOLO asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management inform Parliament on the transformative impacts of its High-Risk Water Programme and the communities and households that have been assisted so far in the last financial year?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU. – Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for the question. It is good, it will allow me to give a brief on the programme.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the High-Risk Water and Sanitation Programme is one of the seven capital programmes administered by the Ministry of Rural, Maritime and Disaster Reconciliation to support communities in rural and maritime areas. The Programme was established to assist rural communities that depend on high-risk water sources.

Currently, about 10.4 percent of the rural population, equivalent to approximately 8,611 households, rely on high-risk water sources. These water sources are considered to be high risk due to their exposure, lack of treatment and potential to cause waterborne diseases such as leptospirosis, typhoid, dengue and diarrhea.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, through this Programme, the Ministry provides water purification systems to improve the quality and safety of water available to these communities. Assistance includes the procurement of water purification buckets, installation of ecological purification systems and provision of other suitable water purification systems. The Programme was also initiated to help with the construction of flush toilets to the vulnerable communities in the rural and maritime areas.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2025-2026 financial year, the Ministry delivered a total of 37 projects under the High-Risk Water and Sanitation Programme. This included 12 high-risk water projects and 12 high-risk sanitation projects. The projects benefited approximately 1,105 households, reaching a total of close to 5,000 people which include 2,578 male; 2,391 female; 1,725 children; and 331 elderly persons.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these interventions have helped improve access to safe, reliable water and sanitation services for the rural maritime communities. They have also supported better health and hygiene, improved living conditions and reduced risks faced by communities experiencing water shortages and inadequate sanitation facilities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Programme also plays an important role in helping communities prepare for droughts and other climate-related challenges. Most importantly, access to safe water and improved sanitation makes a direct difference to the daily lives of our children, elderly persons and vulnerable members of the community.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, moving forward, the Ministry will continue to extend water and sanitation assistance to other high-risk communities. We will also focus on rehabilitating aging and non-functional systems, strengthening community level operations and maintenance, increasing rainwater harvesting and water shortage capacity and incorporating climate resilient infrastructure in future projects.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry remains committed to improving access to safe water and

sanitation services, and ensuring that our rural and maritime communities receive the support they need to improve their living conditions and overall social economic wellbeing.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, what the honourable Minister was explaining makes sense, that we need to protect the lives of our people, but there has to be two processes. Firstly, those people who do not have water at all, they are also at very high risk. Secondly, of course, you are getting the water, but that needs to be treated.

When our Committee went out for rural electrification work, we visited communities and we noted that there is less communication between the Provincial Council and District Officers with the communities because the communities offered that they could lay the pipe because there was a place where the water source is there. They want to do it on their own but there is no guidance from the officers. My question to you is, if the communities are willing to do that kind of work, would that be encouraged by your Ministry on how they can be assisted with that?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we stand ready to assist. If there is any specific community the honourable Member knows, probably after this, we can talk and we can assist that particular community. However, Government is always ready to help the people.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for the update. At least, he realised at the end of his term that it is important. Yes, of course, drinking clean water is everyone's right. I request the honourable Minister to inform this Parliament on the number of communities that currently remain on the Ministry's high-risk water priority list, awaiting assistance.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- I do not have the list with me. Again, the number of communities that will be assisted are already in the system. Be rest assured, honourable Member, that Government will come to their aid, especially, those that need water, so no worries!

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I realise, I have a conflict of interest. I am from the interior of Baulevu. I invite the honourable Minister to Baulevu one day because majority of the people who pass my house do not have proper drinking water. Thanks to Water Supply for supplying water but I request the honourable Member to visit me one day.

MR. SPEAKER.- I do not think the honourable Minister will need to answer that, but the invitation is there, so can you, please, take time to visit Baulevu.

Honourable Members, I think this is the appropriate time for us to suspend our proceedings for lunch. We will resume at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.36 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.39 p.m.

Senior Medical Officers - Public Hospitals
(Question No. 201/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament on the current staffing level for Senior Medical Officer positions across our public hospitals?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- The current Senior Medical Officer positions are serving only in public hospitals, including the Senior Medical Officers, Principal Medical Officers, Chief Medical Officers, Consultants, Divisional Medical Officers and Medical Superintendents. There are currently 490 established Senior Medical Officer positions across the health setting of which, 221 positions are filled and 69 positions are vacant. Out of the 69 positions that are vacant, 56 are being covered through acting appointments.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- The Assistant Minister for Health recently travelled to Manila. Is the Ministry considering getting medical staff to work in our healthcare from the Philippines? Is this something that has been discussed with them, or are we looking at the local recruits only?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has a plan to work with the Ministry of Employment in this regard, especially in countries that currently have staffing shortages. However, this is just at discussion phase, at the moment, and once we have identified all areas or boxes to be ticked, then we can entertain that part of the discussion regarding the Assistant Minister's recent travel to the Philippines.

In the meantime, with the current establishment as it is, we have challenges in some other areas, such as the pharmaceutical and medical imaging technologies. This is something we are trying our best to ensure that we not only recruit but try and retain them as well through various incentives and salary packages.

HON. H. CHAND.- Honourable Minister, there are some critical positions vacant which are affecting services at hospitals, and one is medical imaging technologies. Has there been any analysis done so that more scholarships can be given in areas where there is a high shortage?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Actually, there is a shortage in the country within the medical services, and the Ministry is looking at how we can retain staff. One of the positive outcomes is when they come out of tertiary institutions, their qualifications are recognised also in New Zealand and Australia. This makes the staff marketable even coming out and we wish them well if they want to pursue that employment opportunity.

However, for us within the Ministry, we must ensure that before we send them out into the public sector, we train them so that they are competent enough to operate individually or as part of a team in the subdivisional areas.

MR. SPEAKER.- The next question, Question No. 202 of 2026, is to be asked by honourable Shalen Kumar. We will hold onto that question until later, and if he is not here, then the question will be dropped.

Salary Payment Measures for Teachers
(Question No. 203/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Education inform Parliament on measures that have been implemented to prevent the recurrence of salary payment disruptions affecting teachers?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Education is doing its best in terms of the measures put in place to ensure there is minimal recurrence of salary payment disruptions affecting teachers. The honourable Member is fully aware, as former Director HR, that a very key or important section of the Ministry of Education is everything regarding teachers' salary which is initiated from the Human Resources Department.

Mr. Speaker, generally speaking, following Pay18, the Ministry of Education initiated a formal investigation to establish the circumstances surrounding the salary payment disruptions, including the processes that were followed, the processes that were not followed, the approvals and the responsibilities of the roles that were exercised.

The investigation was undertaken by a panel of Senior Ministry Officials. They have completed their review and have submitted their findings and recommendations to Management for consideration of appropriate intervention.

Pending the outcome of the investigation and upon the directive of the Permanent Secretary, the officer that had been implicated in the matter has been directed to proceed on pending annual leave as an interim administrative measure, to ensure that the matter is appropriately managed, while the findings and recommendations are considered.

Additionally, the Permanent Secretary is also maintaining oversight, the performance, improvement plans, internal movements of staff and the performance of departments to strengthen management oversight, accountability, good governance and effective functioning of critical areas.

In addition to those measures and actions, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has strengthened its HR management processes, the strengthening of the payroll processes which include a comprehensive review of the internal processes, the amendments to Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) that governs the HR Department and the payroll functions, to strengthen control and accountability.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are strengthening our payroll reconciliations on a fortnightly basis to be performed. In its previous phase, we identified teachers who may be missing from upcoming salaries. This has never been done in the previous administration when you were there as the Director HR, so we are trying to improve on those anomalies regarding payroll reconciliation.

On generation and monitoring of exception reports, this is the first time this has been done and it was never done during the previous tenure of the former Director HR. It is for the FEMIS system, the FESA system and the payroll system to promptly identify discrepancies, anomalies, or inconsistencies in future records.

These processes, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Payroll and the HR system is done differently, and every payroll run is checked and balanced against those systems and those teachers that had been processed. This is to improve the strategy and continue to assist in identifying discrepancies. It is

done on a continuous basis - it is not a one-off solution, amongst the two systems in terms of their verification, which is mainly FESA, and the payroll system in relation to teachers' appointment and pay. The verification, updating and cleansing of data within FESA is to improve accuracy, reliability and integrity of employee information used for payroll processing. FESA is the Ministry's employee record, as the honourable Member may be fully aware, a database system, therefore, maintaining the accuracy and relevance of a system in need.

The automation and digitisation of FESA workflow processes enable more efficient, transparent and timely processing of appointments and personnel actions, while reducing the risk of manual errors. A more proactive approach to disappointment renewals ensures that contract extension and appointment actions are processed well in advance to avoid interruptions in salary payment. The Ministry has also reviewed the skillsets of officers looking after critical roles to ensure that the right-fit individuals are in place, and proper investigation and disciplinary procedures are conducted to address the concerns raised from the Pay 18 incident. This was what the honourable Member was referring to.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these measures will significantly strengthen the Ministry's payroll administration processes and enhance its ability to detect and address potential issues before they affect teachers' salaries. While the Ministry acknowledges that there have been pre-existing internal control weaknesses, the Ministry of Education remains committed to continuously improving its systems and processes to ensure that all teachers receive their rightful remuneration accurately and on time.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank the honourable Minister for his response. One of the affected teachers from Nadroga mentioned that she has been teaching for 20 years and this is the first time this has happened - she was not paid. Teachers deserve to be paid correctly and on time, along with clear communication and a fair administrative process.

My question, honourable Minister, is this, before the salaries of the 134 teachers were stopped, was advance notice given to them, or payments were stopped suddenly, as claimed by affected teachers?

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, did you understand the question?

Honourable Chand, can you repeat the question?

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will repeat the question. My question to the honourable Minister, before the salaries of these 134 teachers were stopped, was advance notice given to them or were the payments stopped suddenly, as claimed by some affected teachers?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, if the honourable Member had been listening to the start of my explanation, I had said that a formal internal investigation has been initiated and has recently been completed. We will wait for that report to see whether it addresses the question that you have raised.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank honourable Minister for his explanation. For Pay 18, as mentioned by the honourable Minister, 134 teachers from nine Districts were not paid. Can I ask the honourable Minister whether all those who were affected are now being paid?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think the honourable Member may have been on a different planet. It has been paid, and it has been broadcasted, and it has been put out that all those who were affected were paid on the next following Monday.

MR. SPEAKER.- The 10th Oral Question has been withdrawn.

(Oral Question No. 204/2026 withdrawn)

Pacific Harbour Golf Course Subdivision
(Question No. 205/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government inform Parliament whether all approval protocols were followed in the subdivision of the Pacific Harbour Golf Course in which there is a reduction from 18 holes to 16 holes?

MR. SPEAKER.- For those of you who do not understand golf, that is quite a substantial piece of land between the 16 holes and 18 holes.

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the simple answer to the question is 'yes'. Based on the records from the Department of Town and Country Planning, all the required legal as well as administrative processes, were followed for that particular subdivision. It is good that I also share a little background about this particular land.

As you all know, this land is part of the development that was done to Pacific Harbour a long time ago, in the 1970s. It includes homes, waterways, commercial and recreational facilities, including this 18-hole golf course. The golf course land is a privately owned freehold land and for many years, restrictions were applied to the rezoning, subdivision and development of this land. It was also done through Cabinet approval in the 1980s and in 1993.

In 2022, Cabinet removed those restrictions from the relevant part of the Pacific Harbour golf course land. However, Cabinet did not approve the subdivision but only allowed the registered landowner to submit an application for the normal legal and planning process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is outside the Navua Municipal boundary, but within the wider Navua rural town planning area. It is not covered by an approved town planning scheme. This means, that a formal public notification and objection process used for an approved town planning scheme do not apply to this application. However, the development still had to comply with the Town Planning Act, Subdivision of Land Act, Environmental Laws, and the Special Engineering Infrastructure requirements. At the end of December 2025, the relevant part of of this particular land - Lot 2 DPP, was rezoned to residential use, civic open space, and an access road. This rezoning was also subject to conditions.

On 29th January, 2026, the proposed subdivision received conditional approval. The proposed subdivision scheme plan contains 63 lots, comprised of 61 residential lots, one open space and one access road lot. I want to emphasise that this is a conditional approval. It does not mean that all the environmental, engineering and infrastructure requirements have been completed.

The Department understands that the developer is eventually proposing to reduce the size of the golf course from 18 holes to 9 holes. Other subdivision applications affecting other parts of the golf course plan are currently before the Department. However, these are separate applications that have not been approved in advance and must each be assessed on their own merit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Department of Town and Country Planning did not identify a registered covenant, requiring that a privately owned land to remain an 18-acre golf course. Nevertheless,

outlining all relevant planning, environmental and technical requirements continue to apply. The Ministry is also aware of the concerns raised by Pacific Harbour residents. These include water supply, wastewater and sewerage capacity, drainage, roads, traffic, environmental effects, and whether the existing infrastructure can support further development.

The Department of Town and Country Planning Officials met with residents on 10th August, 2026, heard and discussed these concerns. A representative from the Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) also attended. This concern must now be properly assessed by the responsible agencies before the development can proceed to the later stage.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the developer must provide detailed engineering information and obtain the required approvals and clearances. This may need approval from the WAF, Fiji Roads Authority and other utility agencies. The development must demonstrate how water supply, wastewater disposal, road drainage and stormwater will be properly managed.

The Department of Environment must also determine the full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Mr. Speaker, EIA is required in terms of reference for the assessment I had issued in April 2026. Therefore, the environmental process has not been avoided, it is still a work in progress at the moment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the conditional planning and subdivisional approvals do not replace environmental approval, and the developer must complete a full EIA and comply with all the conditions arising from that process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we also recognise that these developments can affect nearby communities that place pressure on existing infrastructure. And another reason, we are currently reviewing our current Act governing urban planning and development. This includes the Town Planning Act 1946, Subdivision of Land Act 1937, and the land provisions outlined in the Public Health Act 1935.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I apologise, I have a couple of supplementary questions. As you can understand, it is a bit of a sore thumb with respect to those who golf, and you would understand that and also the residents of Pacific Harbour.

Honourable Minister, I understand that the initial application to the Director Town and Country Planning was rejected in 2024. The issues that arose from those who golf there and those who are living there is that there has been an absolute non-consultation with respect to the residents and the owners. As matter of fact, it has gone as far as those two affected holes being pegged already with surveyor pegs. That is something you might want to check out. So, the question is, why was there zero public consultation? If you are saying that it is going to happen at a later stage, should it not have occurred before all of these transpired?

Secondly, on the rejection in 2024, no reasons were given and no information was passed on specifically because there may have been a restrictive covenant on that from day one when that was actually developed. So, the owners there can have access to that information. They are currently getting a zero response from the Office of the Director Town and Country Planning. Is that possible that they can get all that information so they may go to court if they wish to?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank honourable Koya for his supplementary question. As I have said in my response, this particular land is not part of any town planning scheme - it is outside the municipal boundary. So, for those types of cases, they do not need to have any public consultation. That is why we have said, in going forward, there is a need, because of the magnitude of the development, as well as the impact that it is going to have on the environment, that

it is very important that we also conduct. It is part of our review right now, that for any immediate development, even though it is outside the town planning scheme, it needs to have some public participation, exercise, or consultation, to be carried out with residents who reside within that vicinity.

For additional information, based on the record that we have, there is no particular covenant that clearly specifies that the 18-hole process must remain an 18-hole process. I have also asked the consultant, who is also representing the company because they found that it is not providing any benefits in terms of the size of the 18-hole. Perhaps, because not many people are coming to Pacific Harbour right now, or maybe in future years.

For information that is available to the public, I think it is privy to them so in this case, to that particular landowner who is doing the subdivision of this land at Pacific Harbour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER. - It is a question, honourable Koya, that I would suggest a better approach to the recent questions, because there are so many technical aspects that you have raised. I think it is quite important to cover all the protocols that are involved in it.

Government of India's Jaipur Foot Camp
(Question No. 202/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament on the upcoming Jaipur Foot Camp, including the Ministry's preparations and partnership with the Government of India?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.-Thank you Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I thank the honourable Member for his question and to provide the significant progress on the commitment between the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in providing prosthetic services to amputees across Fiji, particularly, through our longstanding partnership with the Jaipur Foot Technology and the Bhagawan Mahavir Vikram Sayadaw Committee of BMVSS of India. Fiji has been using the Jaipur technology prosthesis since 2011. This technology was first introduced during the 2011 Fiji Government-funded Jaipur camp.

Prior to that camp, two technicians were sent to the BMVSS organisation in India for training, and further on-the-job training was provided during that camp, which was held at Tamavua Hospital. And during that inaugural camp, we fitted 714 amputees, including 14 upper-limb amputees. Since then, we have fully adopted Jaipur Foot Technology and have been purchasing materials from the BMVSS organisation to sustain this vital service.

On average, 220 amputees were fitted, both new and replacement prosthesis every year. In 2022, the second Jaipur Foot Camp was held in Fiji. The camp was fully funded by the Indian Government, with the Australian Government supporting the expenses of our local rehabilitation team that assisted the Jaipur team.

A total of 593 amputees were fitted, with 621 young limbs across the three divisions – Tamavua, National Council for Persons with Disabilities Complex in Labasa, and Nadi Hospital. And I am pleased to inform this House that the 2026 Jaipur Foot Camp will be held from 6th of October to 28th of November and will be fully funded by the Indian Government. The Ministry of Health and Medical Services will fund a team of rehabilitation health professionals who will support the Jaipur team in the

three Divisions.

The request for this camp was submitted to the Indian High Commission in June of 2025. This was necessary due to the increasing number of amputees in need of prosthetic services. From April to June 2025 alone, there were 60 amputees already on the waiting list and our local team is unable to cater for the increasing demand for prosthetic services. Mr. Speaker, Sir, said the Indian High Commission has confirmed funding for 650 amputees in Fiji for this year.

The camp will be held in three divisions. Central Division - Tamavua Hospital from 6th October to 21st October, 220 amputees will be treated with prosthesis. Northern Division at the NCPD complex in Labasa from 23rd October to 31st October, 130 amputees will be treated with prosthesis. Western Division at Nadi Hospital from 3rd November to 27th November, 300 amputees will be treated with prosthesis.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, all amputees have been assessed by the Sub-Divisional Team and the Rehab Outreach Team prior to booking for the camp. Between 18 to 20 amputees are booked per day. Amputees will have their stump measurements taken in the morning and will receive their limb by late afternoon.

For future plans, we are looking ahead with the BMVSS team in India. They are already communicating with us regarding advanced technology and how it can be used to support the ongoing needs of our amputees in Fiji.

In this process, stump measurements for selected amputees will be sent to India for the fabrication of the socket using a 3D printer. The socket will then be sent back to Fiji for completion of the process of making the limb. We will trial this on 10 amputees during the Nadi Camp to determine the efficiency of the process and the effectiveness of the sockets made abroad.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Indian Government has also verbally mentioned that they will support any requests for future amputee camps as part of their social responsibility. The Ministry of Health and Medical Services remains committed to ensuring that all Fijians living with disabilities, particularly amputees have access to quality prosthetic services. Our partnership with the BMVSS organisation and the Government of India has been instrumental in transforming the lives of our nation.

I thank the Government of India, the Indian High Commission, Australian Government, and all our partners and stakeholders for their continued support.

HON. S. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a supplementary question to the honourable Minister. We all have learned today that India will fund 650 amputees in the three divisions. So, if the Ministry of Health prepared for more than 650 people, should they turn up to this camp to come on foot? As we have heard from your answer, these foot will be like modern and very flexible, effective and more like the real ones. So, if people turn up and there is a demand for more than 650 patients who are already on the funding list, are we ready to give the backup funds to give them new life?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- The answer is, yes. There are always provisions made available for such cases.

HON. V. LAL.- Sir, I take this opportunity to thank the Indian Government for the assistance. I would like to know what proportion of the cost is being met by the Fiji Government?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Our role in the Camp is to support our local staff

in participating with the team when the Camp starts. So, that can be the rehab team in Tamavua and sending them out to also learn from this opportunity and use that skill locally when needed.

Key Achievements on the Markets for Change Programme
(Question No. 206/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government update Parliament on the key achievements of the Markets for Change Programme and how has it improved the economic opportunities for women market vendors across Fiji?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Local Government is grateful to our partner the UN Women for its continued support in the upgrading and construction of our municipal markets across our country. The UN Women has provided financial support to many municipal market projects under the Market for Change Programme.

The Market for Change Project aims to promote gender equality and the social economic empowerment of markets, especially our ladies. Specific attention is provided to the needs and aspirations of our women market vendors. The Market for Change Project was funded by the Australian Government, Canadian Government, New Zealand Government and implemented by UN Women in partnership with the United Nation Development Fund (UNDP) and Local Government authorities that have been in operation in Fiji since 2014.

The project targets improvements in safety, governance and inclusiveness of municipal markets, particularly for women market vendors who represent a significant proportion of the informal economy in Fiji. UN Women has significantly contributed to upgrading market facilities to be safer, more inclusive and resilient to climate change. Some examples include the following:

- (1) Suva, Nausori, Namaka and Labasa Municipal Markets
 - Construction of safe accommodation spaces,
 - Improvements to roofing and drainage,
 - Establishment of secure storage spaces; and
 - Construction of more climate resilient stalls and structural repairs.
- (2) Levuka, Namaka, Nausori and Rakiraki Markets
 - Construction of new markets which costing approximately \$7 million.
 - Levuka, Nausori, Nadi, Savusavu, Lautoka, Rakiraki town councils have been provided with tables, chairs, tents for casual vendors, bedding for accommodation, centres for soft market furniture, around \$850,000.

The capital project donation towards some of the developments amounts to around \$6.2 million. This is for the construction of the:

- Rakiraki market;
- Nausori Women Vendor accommodation;
- Namaka market;
- Lautoka market;
- Tables and benches outside Ba market;
- Labasa market;
- Savusavu market; and

- Levuka market.

In collaboration with the councils, UN Women funded the establishment of vendor dormitories in multiple municipalities. These facilities provide safe and affordable overnight accommodation for rural women vendors who travel long distances to sell their produce and goods. Today, there are women's accommodations in Levuka, Sigatoka, Suva, Rakiraki, Nadi, and Lautoka with the agreement to support the market agreement through beds, beddings, and tents.

The Market for Change (M4C) Project has trained approximately over 5,000 market vendors nationwide in the areas including:

- (a) Financial literacy and budgeting;
- (b) Market governance and leadership training;
- (c) Gender awareness, and prevention of gender-based violence;
- (d) Disaster preparedness and climate resilience training, and
- (e) Business planning and micro-entrepreneurship.

Through these trainings, market vendors have registered groups with their respective councils. These are the market vendor association, the elected presidents and other committee members. These associations are the voice of the vendors. The market vendor can raise issues and concerns to the council through these associations. It is also helpful to identify the appropriate assistance required from the municipal councils.

Financial business department workshops were conducted across the Western Division markets including Sigatoka, Nadi, Namaka, Lautoka, Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki, covering grant writing, business development, and access to financial support from institutions such as the Fiji Development Bank and the Merchant Finance. The programme has also promoted financial security through a savings initiative for women vendors from Suva, Nausori and Ba Municipal Markets in partnership with UNDP and ANZ.

By 2025, 60 vendors, which includes 59 women, accounts for around 98 percent, have completed the Bula Saver Plus programme, committing to save \$500 over 10 months, and 25 more women joining another cohort. In addition, there are 60 vendors of which 83 percent were women. Through the programme, 300 women across seven municipal markets gained knowledge of grant applications, cooperative registration, as well as regulated financial services.

The programme has also helped bring information services closer to vendors. In 2025, 702 women market vendors accessed information, goods, resources, and services within their market environments through strengthened coordination between their market vendors associations, municipal councils, Government agencies and service providers. In addition, 300 vendors including 210 women, across 12 municipal markets participated in mobile-based monitoring exercises. This strengthened digital engagement and generated information to support learning and advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, another important area of assistance is the improvement of the Municipal Market Regulatory Framework. In 2020, UN Women provided the Ministry with \$89,600 to support the Market Regulations Consultancy. These regulations have been recently approved by Cabinet and is going through the final legal vetting at the Office of the Solicitor-General. It is anticipated that the regulations will be operationalised by the end of this year. These regulations will establish a more consistent, unified, and modern framework for managing and operating municipal markets, supporting the broader market for change for markets that are safer, more inclusive, accountable, and responsive to wellness.

More recently, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government, the Ministry, worked with UN Women through Market for Change Programme to provide 50 CCTV cameras, LED screens, and two public address systems for deployment by the Ministry across eight municipal markets. These are markets in Namaka, Nadi, Labasa, Ba, Rakiraki, Nausori Town, Levuka, and Savusavu. This equipment complements the Memorandum of Understanding between Fiji Police Force and the municipal councils. Together, these measures will strengthen surveillance, improve communication, bring emergencies and support closer cooperation between market's management, councils, and the police to protect vendors and customers.

The Market for Change Programme demonstrated the value of partnership between Government, municipal councils, development partners, market vendor associations, and vendors themselves. In the programme, achievements span across infrastructure, accommodation, financial literacy, business development, leadership, regulation safety, and disaster resilience.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his Ministerial Statement as well as reminding the House on the work we did in women accommodation, so that was great. My question to you is, for women, Market for Change Programme from 2022, they no longer support building women accommodation. If you can tell us some of the changes that has taken place in the programme itself for all of us.

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. She knows the programme well because she was a minister when this project was in place.

Very recently, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have been having meetings with UN Women. But there are some things that they can do to help promote, also to empower our women vendors across the country. And we, of course, ask them for more assistance in constructing more stores like ones that we have in some of the satellite markets. I believe there is one in Waimicia. There are a few initiatives that we have identified that have also sought assistance through the UN Women to assist.

Most of the vendors that are selling on the roadside are mostly women. And there are some things that we also are doing right now, improving those facilities as well as some restrooms to assist our vendors. We are also thankful that we have also been supplied with some CCTV cameras as well as a PA system to improve communication, especially in bigger markets that do not have access to some of this equipment.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his response and actually acknowledging the Rakiraki Market, in particular, that was built by the previous government. Honourable Minister, a quick context to the question I am going to ask is that it is about women vendors who are not able to get stalls at these markets.

Two weeks ago, I met a group of women who do backyard farming. They formed a group and would go to a certain area around Narere to sell their produce. What they informed me, Sir, is that an officer from the town council came in, took their tables away, seized their vegetables, and later, when they passed by that particular roadside, they saw other vendors selling at that particular spot, and they felt discriminated. My question to you is; can you elaborate for the House, and I hope they are listening, whether it is, first of all, legal to sell by the roadside? If it is, are there provisions for permits, and why is there a disparity whereby some of the women vendors feel that they cannot sell by the roadside?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- My answer to your question, honourable Member, is that it is illegal to sell on the roadside. This is because what we have in most of our roadside areas are road reserves. For a vendor to sell on the roadside, he or she needs to obtain consent from the Fiji Roads

Authority (FRA). There are also lands adjacent to those places, and vendors may be deemed to be trespassing if they do not obtain consent from the rightful landlord.

The issue on the ground is that most of our vendors prefer to sell on the roadside. If you walk around, or if you go around most of our municipal markets, there are spaces. I have been to Ba, there are spaces inside the markets, but people still prefer to sell outside. That is why we are implementing this model of regulation, to ensure that we have uniformity and that standard practices are applied across all municipalities.

I also plead with those who wish to sell on the roadside that it is illegal to do so. If you need to sell on the roadside, you need to get the proper approvals from the relevant authorities. In this case, it is the Fiji Roads Authority.

MR. SPEAKER.- Can I have honourable Shalen Kumar first, and then I will come to you, honourable Bala.

HON. S. KUMAR.- Honourable Minister, are there any plans to upgrade these roadside stalls? Some are very popular, and they are the ones where we sometimes stop to buy things such as boiled corn, boiled *ivi*, peanuts, and things like that while travelling. Especially the roadside near Wainadoi, Momi Bay; these are the most female sellers who are doing business there and earning a living. Are there any plans to improve these markets and provide proper facilities, including washroom facilities for the women, under this Market for Change programme for women?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, most of these roadside stalls, or even vendors selling at these roadside stalls, one of the challenges that I have noted is that there is not enough space to put up a proper facility. In addition, you need restrooms to accommodate the vendors, as well as buyers who like to buy from these separate markets.

I think that is something that we are working on right now. For example, in Wainadoi, numbers keep increasing, and it is something that I have also asked the Council to look into whether we have enough space. If the land is privately owned, then we need to get consent from the landlords before we can come up with a concept plan to assist the setting up of markets around some of these areas.

Yes, there are a few areas in Suva where the numbers continue to increase on a daily basis. It comes down to the availability of land, as well as legal ownership of those spaces, before we can actually assist in constructing markets or facilities to provide shelter, as well as markets, for those of our vendors who like to sell on the roadside.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, these overnight accommodations for our women vendors, are they still in use or have they been converted into other use? We have heard about the achievements so far. If you can also mention what are the ongoing challenges that our women vendors face?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the major challenges that our women vendors face – most of them are casual vendors, they come from villages and rural areas – we do not have spaces, especially stalls where we can accommodate them, even in Suva. Now we are getting an increased number of casual vendors who come and sell during the weekends on Thursday, Friday, and Saturdays. However, most markets do not have the spaces to accommodate this increased number of vendors. It is something that we have been discussing with the Councils on how they can address that issue. Maybe it is about time that they come up with two-storey or three-storey markets to try and increase the number of stalls and provide additional income to the vendors.

In terms of accommodation, there are some councils, what has actually happened was the take-up from the women vendors is not really that satisfactory. Some prefer to go back to their villages and return and sell on the next day. Now some of them have gone to the extent of using the space for storage areas. There can also be more awareness and education of vendors, especially women vendors to take up these spaces.

Progress on the Manual Harvester Assistance
(Question No. 207/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Agriculture, Waterways, and Sugar Industry inform Parliament on the progress in rolling out the increased manual harvester assistance and other targeted grower support programmes to address labour shortages during the current harvesting period?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to respond to the honourable Member's question. The Government recognises that the shortage of manual labour has placed additional pressure on growers, particularly during the peak harvesting period. In response, the Government provided \$5 per tonne manual harvesting support to assist growers with the cost of manual harvesting during the 2026 harvesting season. This is an increase of \$3 from the \$2 provided last year.

I wish to clarify that this assistance has been structured differently from previous seasons. In previous years, manual labour subsidy was disbursed to growers up to the conclusion of the harvesting season. To relieve the pressure of cash flow faced by growers, as well as the challenges associated with securing adequate manual labour, the Government has brought forward the disbursement of this assistance. The \$5 per tonne grant is now being paid to the farmers first delivery cane payment and will continue until the end of the 2026 harvesting season.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government is also looking at other measures to increase the availability of harvesting labour. One such strategic initiative is the engagement of our Fiji Corrections Service in the sugarcane harvesting programme, contributing to the sector's operational needs, while also supporting broader rehabilitation and community reintegration objectives. The Fiji Sugar Corporation gratefully acknowledges the invaluable support and assistance of the Commissioner of Corrections and the Fiji Corrections Service in addressing the Corporation's labour requirements for the sugarcane harvesting programme.

We must also recognise that the shortage of agricultural labour is not unique to Fiji. Labour shortage in agriculture is being experienced in many parts of the world, particularly, for physically demanding and seasonal work. Accordingly, the Government is considering a range of options to address workforce requirements, including potential engagement of foreign workers to supplement the domestic harvesting workforce. However, any introduction of foreign labour into the sugar industry, must be carefully managed within the appropriate regulatory and policy framework to ensure that it is responsive to industry need and supports workforce sustainability and safeguards the interests of the domestic labour market.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Sugar Cane Growers Council is working collaboratively with relevant Government ministries and agencies, including Immigration authorities, to assess and establish the regulatory and operational requirements for such an agreement.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while foreign labour can provide short-term relief, Government recognises that it cannot be relied upon as the sole long-term response to the industry's harvesting challenges.

A sustainable approach will therefore require greater focus on mechanisation, innovation and adoption of technologies that can strengthen productivity, reduce labour dependency and build the industry resilient over the long term.

As part of this approach, the Government and industry have introduced a specialised mechanical harvester from Japan for a large-scale trial during the current harvesting season to assess its sustainability under Fiji's conditions, including terrain, field conditions, harvesting capacity, operating cost and the quality of the cane delivered.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are also examining other specialised harvesting technology, with the use of excavators with specialised extensions. These technologies have also been used by some of the sugarcane producing countries. The Government will continue to work closely with the Sugar Cane Growers Council, Fiji Sugar Corporation, Fiji Corrections Service, growers, harvesting contractors and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that our farmers receive the support they require during the current harvesting season.

Our commitment remains steadfast to supporting our growers, safeguarding the continuity and reliability of cane supply to our mills, and progressively modernising the harvesting system. Through these priority strategies, we aim to strengthen the resilience, productivity and long-term sustainability of the sugar industry.

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, similar to the manual harvesting assistance, there is also assistance towards the mechanical harvesting. Can the honourable Minister confirm it will continue till we finish the harvesting season this year?

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Minister, do you wish him to repeat the question? Can you do that honourable Pillay?

HON. V. PILLAY.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, similar to manual harvesting assistance, there is also agricultural assistance being provided by Government for mechanical harvest. Can the honourable Minister confirm whether it will continue till we finish off this season?

HON. T. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, with mechanical harvesting, the Government provided a subsidy for manual harvesting. To date, the budget and the timeline for the use of that allocation is coming to an end, and there have been a number of meetings to discuss how we will provide assistance for harvesting the remaining sugarcane plantations and that should be made known in due course.

Mahogany Leases Survey Programme in Vanua Levu
(Question No. 208/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources provide the total acreage surveyed under the Mahogany Leases Survey Programme in Vanua Levu and how has it supported the landowner's economic empowerment and sustainable development?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO. – I am happy to provide the answer to the Honourable Vanawalu. Allow me, Mr. Speaker, Sir, just to preface the answer to the question with some general observations so that we can get the context of what really we are dealing with, and then we are going to localise the answer to Vanua Levu.

As we understand, Mr. Speaker, Sir, mahogany is not just a crop, it is an intergenerational asset that is owned by citizens of the country. The company that also is responsible for the plantations is a state-owned company. The truth, Mr. Speaker, is that the asset that currently exists in Vanua Levu has delivered nothing yet. It has not delivered a dollar, it has not delivered any dividend, and it has not delivered a lease. Why? Because there needs to be proper survey, properly registered lease, and then we can start talking about the benefits that will come to the landowning units in Vanua Levu.

The survey, Mr. Speaker, is the key that unlocks the value of what we are talking about. Allow me, Mr. Speaker, Sir, just to outline to the House where in Vanua Levu these mahogany woodlots are located. They are located in Navonu, they are located in Saqani. One is located in Seaqaqa, in Dreketi, in Korotari, and then in Wainunu. The job of the surveyors, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the first task that they needed to do in the completion of this survey is identification and confirmation of land ownership.

It means that surveyors will have to work with TLTB, confirm *Mataqali* or landowning units that hold the customary title to the patch of land on which the mahogany is planted. They are not always straightforward, Mr. Speaker, Sir, boundaries, of course, we understand experientially that boundaries get disputed at times. Records may be incomplete, and the survey must establish beyond doubt who actually owns it because of their value that currently grows out of that land.

The second, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is the task of physical boundary demarcation. The survey team must go onto the land, often in remote and difficult terrain, to mark and record the boundaries of each mahogany plantation block and this involves cutting down lines, placing survey marks, and recording precise coordinates using modern surveying technology.

The third task is area computation and mapping. Once boundaries are established, the actual acreage or hectareage of each block must be calculated, and they are also mapped. This becomes a legal record of what the landowning unit owns and what the mahogany resource covers.

The fourth and final, is the registration and the preparation of the lease document. The survey data fits into the preparation of the mahogany leases, the legal instrument, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that allows the Fiji Hardwood Corporation to then go on and harvest the mahogany timber. Now, without the completed survey, no lease is to be properly issued and without that lease no harvest can legally proceed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to the question of scale. The total mahogany plantation area in which these seven woodlots are located is 16,713 hectares and that is the figure provided to us by the Fiji Hardwood Corporation within that area the standing volume is estimated to be around 2.5 million cubic metres of mahogany stone logs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, right now, pursuant to a Cabinet decision taken in 2023, the conduct of the survey on all Vanua Levu mahogany woodlots have been assigned to the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission (TLFC) surveyors from the Ministry of Land Survey Department and currently out of the \$510,000 that was allocated in the budget, they are currently working on the Korotari woodlot and then they will go to the other six woodlots. I am sure that we all appreciate the Mahogany (Amendment) Bill that we have passed in this House, which contains a lot of benefits that will come out once the leases are registered and the mahogany is being harvested.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- What are some of the major challenges faced by the ministry during the survey period?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, obviously the first that I have mentioned and one that I have continued to share in this House in the past is the terrain challenge that our surveyors have had to go through. The terrains are at times without mercy, and then we have to go through with

the prevailing weather conditions at the time when they are conducting this.

The other obvious one that continues to challenge, in fact, at times it haunts the surveyors on the ground, because disputes between landowning units sometimes end in the forests. It is not unusual that our survey team has run from the forest with their equipment because landowning units have not really backed down the demarcations. So, it involves a lot of visitation, reconciliation, going to villages and landowning units, doing our *sevusevu* just to make sure that when our surveyors are in and around the bushes and in the woodlots, that people understand why they are there for and they are not there to do anything else, but to make sure that the lease documents are able to be executed so that ultimately the forests are able to be harvested.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for the answers to the questions. I know it is a difficult task to carry out the surveys. Given the terrain that has been pointed out, the access to appropriate staffing and also cost-affected TLFC has only one surveyor. How long does it take to complete the survey of the remaining woodlots so that the landowning units might then begin to get the benefit that they require?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I imagine it to take a couple of years, but I will come back to the Member with at least some exact estimates.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Honourable Minister, you mentioned the dispute amongst the landowning units. I know I have raised this already with you the dispute between Land Owning Units and Fiji Hardwood itself on the issue of overplanting. How is that addressed in this current exercise?

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is always going to be some middle ground that we will have to identify. We know from the record that there were the initial areas that were planted. For example, I just identified a number in all of the seven woodlots in Vanua Levu as per the record of Fiji Hardwood 16,000 or so hectares.

I think the reality is now with overplanting or overgrown it is actually taken more than that. I think the estimate is around 25,000 hectares. So, you have a couple of hectares where you are going to have to negotiate, and I am sure that in the course of the lease preparation we will continue to liaise with the landowning units as to how we can back down those additional hectareage that mahogany have grown into. There is no set formula, and there is certainly no magic formula. It is something that we will just have to liaise and negotiate with landowners and, like I said, try and find a middle ground.

Water Level at Monasavu Dam and EFL Generation Capacity
(Question No. 209/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport update Parliament on the current water level at Monasavu Dam and EFL's generation capacity, heading into the dry season?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as of 28th September, 2026, the water level at Monasavu Dam stands at 732.20 metres. This is 17.2 metres above the safe operating level and 12.8 metres below the dam spill level.

In terms of national electricity generation capacity, Energy Fiji Limited (EFL) currently has a total available generation capacity of 295.07 megawatts (MW), comprising renewable generation

of 117.33 MW, thermal generation of 177.74 MW, with a total available national generation capacity of 295.07 MW.

Fiji's normal dry season generally extends from May to October each year. However, in view of the prevailing *El Nino* weather pattern affecting the Fiji Group, the Fiji Meteorological Services advised EFL that dry conditions could potentially extend to the end of 2026, or into the first quarter of 2027.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in preparation for a worst-case *El Nino* scenario, EFL has taken proactive measures to strengthen the security and reliability of electricity supply. Effective from July 2026, EFL has adjusted its generation mix to conserve water at the Monasavu and Nadarivatu hydroelectric schemes, thereby preserving hydro storage for use when it is most needed.

As part of its contingency arrangements, EFL is also procuring and installing an additional 16 x 1 MW containerised diesel generator sets, providing a combined additional capacity of 16 MW. These units are scheduled for installation from October to November 2026. These additional capacities are intended to ensure that sufficient generation is available to meet increasing electricity demand and to minimise the risk of disruptions to electricity supply and the risk to the wider Fijian economy.

Furthermore, EFL is expected to commission a new 3 x 10 MW heavy fuel oil (HFO) power plant at Vuda from December 2026, providing an additional 30 MW of generation capacity. This investment will significantly strengthen generation capacity for Viti Levu, in the short to medium term, while EFL progresses its transition towards increased renewable energy generation, particularly, solar photovoltaic (PV) systems supported by Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) over the next two to three years.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is also important to note that a new 2 x 10 MW HFO power plant at Kinoya Power Station with a total capacity of 20 MW was commissioned early in 2026. This increased utilisation of HFO generation also provides a significant fuel cost advantage compared with generation from more expensive industrial diesel oil (IDO) plants. During 2026, the reported price differential between HFO and IDO has ranged from approximately \$600 per metric tonne to \$2,300 per metric tonne, further supporting EFL's efforts to manage generation costs while maintaining security of supply.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the current Monasavu water level remains above the safe operating level. Nevertheless, given the potential for an extended dry period, EFL is taking a prudent and proactive approach by conserving hydro resources, increasing thermal generation capacity and implementing contingency generation arrangements. These measures are intended to ensure that Fiji has sufficient generation capacity to meet electricity demand, minimise the risk of supply disruptions and support the continued operation and growth of the Fijian economy, while EFL advances its long-term transition towards renewable energy and battery storage technologies.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I thank the honourable Minister for his reply. There is, obviously, a need to make sure that we have energy security and, of course, to conserve water in the dams. There is a bit of concern with the increasing uptake of HFOs and industrial emissions, especially with pre-COP around the corner. I am glad to see that the hydro plants are in the process.

Mr. Speaker, we always have this perennial problem of people wanting to invest in solar photovoltaics, and they always have an issue. They say that sunlight is good here. They always have an issue of negotiating the deals at which EFL buys the power. We have pre-COP coming up, we need energy security so, obviously, we will have more emissions because we have to - there is no

other way forward. I think the way forward is in terms of photovoltaics. What is the medium-term plan in terms of making sure that more photovoltaics come online and that EFL actually buys and uses it for the benefit of the country?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- In terms of strategic direction, there are various initiatives, currently, being pursued by EFL. There is a \$2 billion, as you are probably aware, Renewable Energy and Transition Investment Programme, which is currently underway, to transform Fiji's electricity system and support the country's long-term economic and energy security.

As a nation, we target to increase renewable generation to approximately 60 percent by 2029 and 90 percent by 2035. At the same time, there are various ongoing projects right now in terms of modernising the electricity grid, improving reliability and strengthening energy security as we move forward. There are various projects currently underway in this regard. For hydropower - Namosi, Savatu and Qaliwana; and solar, a new solar PV and BESS (Battery Energy Storage System).

There is a significant discussion intensified right now in terms of solar projects in various locations around Fiji, specifically, in the West and also in the interior as we move forward. Of course, I have mentioned the improved transmissions, the control systems, national control centre, and in terms of smart grid systems. With all these, the Ministry of Finance, Public Works, and EFL is working closely in terms of the financing part, a combination of Government financing and various financial institutions, including World Bank and ADB, and various development partners.

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, looking at the current situation, how long can normal hydro generation be maintained if rainfall remains below average?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- As I have already mentioned, *El Nino* in terms of forecasting, will go into the wet season. With that, at the moment, the levels, as I have already explained, is sustainable. However, as we move forward, there are measures in place, for example, as the water level falls, we will need to go into power rationing, prioritising certain areas or industries, for example, hospitals and other essential services. So, that is the strategy, moving forward.

However, if it really falls to a critical level, of course, we will need to increase usage in terms of fossil fuels but, at the same time, power rationing will need to come into place. It has already started in terms of awareness, so our people will need to ration power. They need to cut down on their power usage, as we move forward. Even with some of our other industries, as we move forward, we will all need to work together to deal with this situation.

With our programme in place in terms of renewable energy, once that is in place in the next 10 to 15 years, there will be less need to rely on weather-related types of power generation, such as hydro.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I think it is an appropriate time to take our tea break. However, before we do, for the purpose of complying with the Standing Orders with respect to our sitting time, I call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move a suspension motion.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, under Standing Order 6, I move:

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

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

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we still have to do six Oral Questions, 10 Written Questions and Bills for First Reading and consideration.

MR. SPEAKER.- The floor is now open to the honourable Members for debate of the motion, if any.

Since no Member is speaking on the motion, I now call on the Leader of the Government in Parliament to speak in reply, if necessary.

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have no further comments.

MR. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

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

The Parliament adjourned at 4.03 p.m.

QUESTIONS

The Parliament resumed at 4.41 p.m.

Crop Diversification within the Sugar Industry (Question No. 210/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Agriculture, Waterways, and Sugar Industry update Parliament on the progress of Government's initiatives to support crop diversification within the sugar industry?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the important areas of our current work in the sugar sector is diversification. Many of our farmers operate on relatively small parcels of land. For these smallholder farmers, the economics of cane production can be particularly challenging, given the rising input costs and increasing difficulties in securing labour, high harvesting and transportation costs, and the impact of climate events.

The production figures further demonstrate this challenge. In 2025, 3,752 farmers, representing 41.3 percent of the total number of cane farmers, collectively produced only 13.2 percent of the total cane production. This highlights the importance of providing these smallholder farmers with viable options to improve their returns from the land they cultivate, including appropriate crop diversification and integrated farming opportunities. Unlike large farms, smallholder farmers have limited opportunities to achieve economies of scale.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, diversification should not be understood as an effort to remove farmers away from sugarcane - this should be viewed as a strategic approach to expanding farmers' economic choice, strengthening their resilience of the agricultural sector, and ensuring that land is utilised for activities that delivers the most sustainable and productive economic returns. It can also create opportunities to supply the growing tourism sector, support the development of value-added agro-processing industries, and facilitate the development of domestic and export markets.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is where the European Union's support for diversification becomes particularly important. As highlighted previously, the Government is collaborating with the European Union and the Food and Agriculture Organization. They have commenced work to assess the feasibility of transitioning suitable areas.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the report arising from the first phase is expected to be completed in November this year and will provide the basis of determining the second phase, including the consideration of potential pilot intervention. Again, I wish to make it clear that the Government is not proposing a wholesale transition away from sugarcane. We seek to use evidence-based analysis to determine where sugar production should be maintained, where economic diversification is viable, and where integrated farming models will generate the greatest returns and sustainable benefit to our farmers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while we await the findings of this study, the Government is not sitting idle. At the macro level, Government is supporting investors who invest in projects that addresses the maximum output for arable agriculture land that had been under sugarcane.

I invite you to pay a visit to the Fiji Water Citrus Project in the North. Come and look at the progress of real crop diversification. Come and experience the new look of the sector when

diversification is accepted and adopted.

Under the 2026-2027 National Budget, the Ministry's Crop Production Division has also been provided with funding specifically for crop diversification. We are already in the process of identifying and developing suitable diversification projects for smaller sugarcane farmers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry had been supporting cane farmers on non-sugar crops assistance including:

- assistance on land preparation;
- grants on small farming implements;
- farm mechanisation assistance;
- subsidy on fertilizer and chemical;
- advisory services;
- assistance in project diversification;
- climate smart agriculture;
- product development and value addition;
- market alignment and development; and many more

The sugar industry will continue to serve as a vital pillar of our agricultural economy, while diversification will create opportunities to enhance the resilience and long-term sustainability of farming communities across the cane belt areas.

Policy for Reconnection of Electricity Supply
(Question No. 211/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport inform Parliament whether there is a policy or prescribed timeframe for the reconnection of electricity supply after a customer has settled all outstanding amounts?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, EFL has an established process for the reconnection of electricity supply following disconnection for non-payment. Once the customer has settled the full outstanding amount, EFL's prescribed maximum timeframe for reconnection is within 24 working hours, subject to operational considerations, such as time payment is received, prevailing weather conditions, availability of field resources, and the volume of reconnection requests to be attended to. So, it is important to extend the process leading to disconnection and sub-subsequent reconnection.

Under EFL's current billing process, a customer is generally disconnected approximately one month after the electricity bill is issued if the amount remains unpaid. For example, where a bill is generated on 1st September, the payment due date stated on the bill would be 15th September. If the bill remains outstanding, the customer may be disconnected from 1st October.

Prior to disconnection, EFL generally issues a reminder by text message or email to customers who are registered in its billing system and have provided a valid mobile contact number or email address. The purpose of this notification is to remind customers of their outstanding amount and provide them with an opportunity to settle their account and avoid disconnection.

Once a customer has been disconnected, the outstanding amount must be paid in full for the account to be captured in EFL's reconnection report and processed for reconnection. The actual

timing of reconnection will then depend on when the payment is made and received in the EFL system. The EFL endeavours to restore electricity supply as soon as practical. However, the maximum reconnection timeframe is currently 24 working hours following the settlement of the outstanding amount.

As already mentioned, the factors taken into consideration include time of payment, weather conditions, availability and deployment of resources, where reconnection requests must be managed alongside EFL's other operational requirements, volume of reconnection requests, where EFL refers to first-come-first-served basis. It should be noted that at the end of the day, EFL continues to face climate change challenges at its hydro stations, supply challenges and cost of fossil fuels and accelerating capital and operational costs. The least we can do is pay our EFL bills on time.

HON. P.B. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, within 24 hours and after 24 hours is two different things. We are led to believe from staff of EFL that reconnection will be done after 24 hours. I am requesting the honourable Minister to reconsider his new policy. Can it be done? Thank you.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, what the honourable Minister said just a while ago is not what people are experiencing. There is a difference between the policy in place and the experience of the public, and when we were reviewing the EFL Report, this was one of the key issues that came up because EFL has stopped providing service after 5.00 p.m. on a working day. Then on weekends, they do not provide service.

What we understand that the reason for that is to cut down overtime costs. However, as a monopoly, I expect EFL to provide service to the public 24 hours because they have no other place to go for their energy sources. In repeating the same question, can the honourable Minister look into this issue and come back and inform the public that you have changed the policy?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, it is not within 24 hours, it is within 24 working hours. Working hours means normal working hours in a day. When the question was asked about the water level at Monasavu regarding the challenges faced by EFL, I had already explained, so one of the areas being rationalized and reviewed is the operational costs. Of course, overtime and all that will need to be taken into consideration, we are facing high fuel costs, et cetera. There was one specific term used by honourable Premila Kumar, "you created a monopoly". I mean, who created the monopoly, was it us or you? Was it this Government or your Government?

In terms of the control, this Government would have maintained a strategic asset under its control. Unfortunately, at the moment, that control is, I would say, diluted through the Board where we have Government nominees and, of course, the other shareholders, so Government cannot dictate at their level. So, who created that situation? You created it in the last government. It is something that is there, so we have to work within it. However, as per the request, yes, I will convey it but we have to understand the operational limitations right now, given the challenges of high fuel cost and *El Nino*. Do you know what *El Nino* is?

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I thank the honourable Minister for his response which is absolutely not in favour of public. Mr. Speaker, EFL is a monopoly, and it has been there for a while. Fifty one percent shares means that the Government has control over it. Giving the shares away to a foreign company means that Government does not have to fork out money from their pocket to invest in renewable energy sources, and that is the reason.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, EFL cannot cut both ways. For example, in Namau which is in the interior of Ba, people are buying cash power, but in the weekends there is no power. They cut it off, but they have already paid. How do you account for that service, honourable Minister?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- I also have cash power, so when you charge, the power is supplied. I am not sure, so it is something that we need to look at. It could be related to the infrastructure in that area or some power outages which has been happening but, definitely, we can take that up and look into it.

MR. SPEAKER.- I will tell you, why, because I am also one of those consumers who suffer the same fate as you are talking about. I know this situation, and as the honourable Minister said that he is going to look into it, I live in hope that that is what is going to happen.

HON. V. LAL.- I just want to know, does this timeframe differ between rural, urban and maritime customers, as the honourable Minister has said? Is it the same for everyone, or there is a difference, just like she is talking about rural communities.

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- I need to look into that but, definitely, for maritime, it is not connected to the grid, except for Ovalau. I do not have an answer right now but, definitely, we will be liaising with EFL to improve aspects of its operations.

In terms of the environment which we are in right now, it is a very difficult situation, as we move forward and as you will understand.

Strengthen the Security and Accuracy of Fiji's Legal Registries
(Question No. 212/2026)

HON. A.N. TUICOLO asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General and Acting Minister for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations inform Parliament on the measures taken to strengthen the security and accuracy of Fiji's Legal Registries, particularly, to prevent tampering, unauthorised access, or loss of sensitive records?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have measures taken by the Ministry of Justice to strengthen the security and accuracy of Fiji's Legal Registries, and to safeguard them against tampering, unauthorised excess and loss of sensitive information.

The Ministry of Justice administered four Legal Registries, the Registry of Titles, Registry of Companies, Official Receivers and Births, Deaths and Marriages Registry. Each of the Registry is overseen by a Registry Head, responsible for the administration, security and custodianship of the record under their care.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, my staff often say that the Ministry of Justice is where life begins and where life ends. From birth to death and everything in between, our Registries maintain records that underpin legal identity, property rights, commercial activity and administration of justice. These records are critical national assets and must be protected accordingly.

Across all Registries, access is restricted to authorised officers and governed by established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Registry transactions are subject to defined verification, review and approval processes to ensure that all actions are properly authorised, traceable and

accountable. Applications are processed through multiple levels of scrutiny, with responsibilities assigned according to clearly defined delegations of authority.

The Ministry is also progressively digitising Registry records. Most Registries now maintain digitised records to support secure storage, effective retrieval, business continuity and the preservation of information. This reduces the risks associated with relying solely on physical records and strengthen overall record management practices.

For Births, Deaths and Marriages Registry, additional safeguards apply because civil registration records form the basis of a person's legal identity. Implications for registrations, corrections and amendments must be supported by prescribed documentation and are subject to verification approval requirements. Any changes to a registry record must comply with legislative and administrative requirements, ensuring accountability and a clear audit trail for all amendments.

For the Registrar of Companies, company records are protected through system controls, supervising oversight and prescribed filing requirements. Electronic transactions are recorded and traceable, allowing the Registrar to identify changes made to company records and the parties responsible for those changes. When filing or raising concerns regarding discrepancies, competing claims or validity, additional security is undertaken and, where necessary, legal advice may be obtained from the Solicitor-General's Office before administrative action is taken. Electronic records are further safeguarded through information technology controls and backup arrangements.

The Official Receiver's Office maintains a secure storage arrangement, record management practice and supervising review process to safeguard bankruptcy and insolvency records. Discussions are also underway to digitise insolvency records and registry services as part of the broader reforms proposed under the Personal Insolvency, Financial Rehabilitation and Entrepreneurial Rescue Bill 2025. These reforms are intended to strengthen security, accessibility and the integrity of registry information.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry recognises that information security and record management require continuous improvement. Cabinet has approved the digitisation of the Legal Registries, with the Registrar of Titles identified as a priority project.

Following a comprehensive scoping review undertaken by the support from the Asian Development Bank, the project is currently in its planning and preparation phase. This includes finalising governance arrangement, technical architecture, privacy protection, procurement requirements and necessary legislative reform. The current phase is expected to conclude by December of this year, with implementation anticipated in 2027. The Ministry also maintains secure records, storage facilities and requires officers to comply with the standard records and management standard.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, across Registries, files and transactions are recorded and monitored to ensure accountability, transparency and credibility through life-cycle matters. Officers are regularly reminded of their obligations relating to confidentiality, responsible records management and the protection of sensitive information.

HON. A.N. TUICOLA.- Will the multi-phase digital transformation framework lead to a reduction in workforce requirements?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Not directly, but what will bring is more efficiency and other Ministries to also have access to the records that we have.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Minister, what is the timeframe with respect to the upload of everything in respect of making it digital in terms of the Title's Office. I ask very simply because lawyers have complained that apparently, settlements get delayed for a couple of days as files are lost. I still understand that there are quite a few files that are still being carried around from one place to another and it can happen. Is there a mechanism to ensure that those settlements happen on time and they do not lose date because money is at stake.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not have the specific answer on the timeframe. I know it can take long. For the digitisation of the Registrar of Titles, after the conclusion of the first phase, come next year, we should see some real results. But if there are urgent requests, they can be directed to me, and I can direct the Registrar of Titles to facilitate.

For those in the West, they make special arrangements because they travel from the West, and we try our best to facilitate so they can get their records in less than a week.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Just a quick follow-up, Mr. Speaker, will this mean that the end result would be that lawyers will be able to conduct settlements online?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Yes.

Samabula Health Facility – Reduction of Waiting Time
(Question No. 213/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament on the plans or measures that the Ministry has in place to reduce waiting times and improve access to health services at the Samabula Health Facility?

HON. RATU DR. A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question. The Samabula Health Centre is one of the core Centres within the Suva Subdivisional area that serves a population of more than 20,000. It is one of the four high-demand facilities within the Suva Subdivision.

In terms of ensuring that we have improved patient flow and reduced waiting times at this facility, the Ministry has undertaken the following measures:

- It has implemented the extension of operating hours.
- Weekly services, Samabula Health Centre is operating two shifts - 6.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. and 2.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m. The standard coverage allows patients' greater flexibility in accessing care outside peak hours.
- There is increased medical officer allocation. Approximately seven Medical Officers are on shift work during weekdays, depending on staff availability; four newly appointed Medical Officers are gaining experience under supervision, which adds to the clinical capacity of the facility.
- There is senior supervision and mentoring. All senior Medical Officers are paired with new Medical Officers to provide guidance and support, especially, to ensure that our junior officers are well supported while maintaining quality care.
- Nurse practitioners who also serve in the facility.
- Allocated consultation area.
- Support and complement patient assessment and management.
- When is needed, allocation of additional consultation room during busy periods.

- Increase consultation capacity and reduce bottlenecks in patient flow.
- Patient triaging – patients are triaged as they present to the facility, so they are prioritised according to their need. This ensures that urgent cases receive attention properly, while less critical cases are managed efficiently.
- Weekend services – Staffing is reduced on weekends with a maximum of approximately three Medical Officers available.
- Continuous staff support – New staff are supported by senior staff to improve confidence and efficiency in managing patients.

I am pleased to inform the House that Samabula Health Centre is one of the prioritised health facilities identified under the PHIT Project that will undergo necessary assistance in the near future.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Thank you for your response, honourable Minister. One of the issues that has been brought up quite consistently by some of the facilities outside the main hospital is that allocated staff being moved across to the main hospitals when there is shortage in the main hospitals and that affects services. How is that being handled and what are the long-term plans in terms of solutions to these issues?

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Those kinds of decisions are made at the subdivisional level whereby the Senior Divisional Medical Officer works in conjunction with the Medical Superintendent at CWM Hospital in cases such as those. The main idea is to shift the work where it is needed the most but then, again, once the work eases off at that facility, then staff are repositioned to their original station.

We do that to ensure that in areas that do need it the most, we send the support there. In this case, if CWM Hospital needs that support, then they have to make out a workplan with the respective Divisional Medical Officer and the Subdivisional Medical Officer who will be releasing those staff to cater as a temporary measure.

Review and Upgrade of Judiciary Security Protocols
(Question No. 214/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General and Acting Minister for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations update Parliament on what immediate steps has the Ministry implemented to review and upgrade security protocols within the Judiciary, including evidence storage and chain-of-custody procedures?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. Government recognises that the security of court premises, exhibits and evidence is an important part of maintaining the integrity of justice, public confidence and the administration of justice. Following concerns raised regarding security arrangements, the Judiciary has taken steps to review existing protocols, particularly, in relation to the storage, handling, movement, and the release of exhibits and other evidentiary material.

As part of this process, the Chief Registrar has conducted an assessment across the relevant registries. This inspection included an assessment of exhibit storage arrangements, registers and records; procedures for the handling, movement and release of exhibits; chain- of-custody processes, CCTV coverage, and other physical security measures. The purpose of this assessment is to identify any gaps in the existing arrangements, and to determine where additional safeguards, controls and

improvements may be required.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am also advised that a report from this arrangement is currently being prepared. This will identify the gaps noted and set out remedial measures and improvements required for the implementation to further strengthen the Judiciary's security protocols and exhibit management procedures.

Work has commenced on security upgrades at the High Court Criminal Registry. I am advised that these upgrades began yesterday, Monday, 28th September, and are currently progressing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, just for the information of the House, there were some initial delays associated with the procurement and approval process for IT-related security equipment and systems, as these underwent assessment and approval from ICT services and procurement processes. However, this matter has now been progressed, and the Chief Registrar will continue to monitor the completion of the required work.

The proper management and security of evidence do not rest on physical storage alone. They also require clear procedures, proper documentation, controlled access, appropriate recording of movement of exhibits, and effective chain-of-custody mechanisms. These safeguards are necessary to preserve the integrity of evidence throughout the judicial process and to ensure accountability at every stage of its handling.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as part of the strengthening of these arrangements, consideration has also been given to access controls, record-keeping, staff responsibilities, incident reporting, and regular monitoring of the exhibit management processes. Where improvements are identified, these will be addressed through the appropriate administrative and operational measures, including the reinforcement of procedures and staff awareness where necessary.

The Judiciary remains committed to upholding the high standard of integrity, accountability, transparency, and good governance. These principles are fundamental to maintaining public confidence in the administration of justice. The Judiciary will continue to ensure that established procedures and safeguards are followed and that any concerns are addressed through the appropriate institutional processes. This includes ensuring that matters are properly documented, reviewed, and where necessary, investigated by the appropriate authorities while respecting due process and the independence of the Judiciary.

Government will continue to support the Judiciary in strengthening these arrangements and ensuring that appropriate security measures are in place. This is not a one-off exercise. The Judiciary will continue to monitor the implementation of any recommendation arising from the review and assess the effectiveness of the measures put in place. This will help ensure that the security and evidence management protocols remain fit for purpose and continue to be the standard expected in a modern justice system.

Government will continue to monitor the implementation of the necessary security and administrative improvements and ensure that appropriate action is taken through proper institutional and legal processes. Government remains committed to strengthening the administration of justice and ensuring that the systems supporting our courts operate with integrity, accountability and in accordance with the law.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I assume my seat, I believe it is only proper that as Head of the Bar, express disappointment and shock at the release made by the Police of what was believed to be cocaine. When they were tested, they found out they were not cocaine, and this has been conveyed

to the honourable Prime Minister this morning. The Police investigations are ongoing. Because it is a matter of investigation, I ask for patience to trust the investigation.

This has come at a time when we are talking about transnational crime. No one is immune from this. No stone will be unturned. Anyone found guilty will be made accountable. The Chief Justice has made that statement, and I, as the Head of the Bar, stand here to express great sadness of what has transpired, and I hope for understanding that we will trust the process from the Police to the investigation and the matters be tried in court.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his reply. On that particular issue that he pointed out, the replacement of the cocaine with flour, that is a sad indictment of what is there and whoever is responsible, whether it is the Police, the Judiciary, or everyone. The honourable Minister talked about maintaining the trust of the public. That kind of thing is going to completely remove all trust.

(Honourable Member interjected)

HON. J. USAMATE.- Listen, this is my question!

I always tell you about execution. We talk about big plans. What are we going to do? How do we know now that what is in all those exhibits is really what is claimed to be in those exhibits? What are we doing now to make sure that what is supposed to be in those exhibits are actually there?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- I have just said that it is under police investigation. The Police have indicated that to the members of the public and we will just have to wait.

MR. SPEAKER.- Yes, I hope you are not following the same route, honourable Kumar.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- It is really not that. My question is more related to whether that area had CCTV camera or not, and whether audits were undertaken or not? I just want to know these two things.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not in a position to answer that, but I can come next month and give a full detail to this House. This House needs to know because the place where we believe is the safest is not. This happens in every other country; Fiji is no different. We are asking people to be patient, and this is not new. It just goes to show the magnitude of the problem we are facing.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- A very quick question, honourable Attorney-General. Does this mean that it will necessitate the check of all the evidence being held in custody? I will give you an example, previously, I think it was found that whiskey bottles did not have whiskey in them, but tea. It is not a problem as you say from now, it is from before. So, does that mean that you will be undertaking a thorough, complete check (because some evidence may now be compromised) of each bit of evidence that is actually being held in custody of the courts or the police right throughout the country?

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, following the incident, I directed a meeting in my office - the Chief Registrar, Acting Director of Public Prosecution, Commissioner of Police and Permanent Secretary for Justice just to ascertain what happened. Following that, there were a series of meetings, as a result of that meeting, the changes are now being activated. It is too early to say, but most certainly, what I understand is in terms of the police, they have taken positive actions where exhibits are controlled in specific areas unlike before, where they are kept at respective stations, they have improved.

I am quite aware, this is not new, I am aware. I was in Sigatoka, this happened. In Lautoka, if you may recall some months ago, registry in Lautoka, cash and drugs. The communication was made from Maximum Prison to that officer. I cannot mention the matter, but these are things that are happening, the police have taken proactive steps. We will certainly be looking at it. I have just been briefed this afternoon before I came of the discovery. Most certainly, honourable Koya.

MR. SPEAKER.- We are all dismayed and shocked with what has happened and I think we leave it to the authorities to make the appropriate investigation, and I am sure all the Members would like to see the outcome of the investigation. So, we leave it at that.

Written Questions

Pine Plantation on Lakeba, Lau (Question No. 215/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry inform Parliament of the following –

- (a) revenue earned by each *yavusa* from pine sales over the past three years arising from the pine plantation on Lakeba in Lau;
- (b) an overview of how different *yavusa* in Lakeba will benefit from harvest of pine over the next 5 years; and
- (c) an overview of how profits from pine proceeds will be shared amongst the various *yavusa* of Lakeba?

¹ HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby table my response to Written Question No. 215/2026.

Numbers of Registered Surveyors in Fiji (Question No. 216/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources update Parliament on the:

- (a) current number of registered surveyors in Fiji;
- (b) provide a breakdown of how many are currently employed in Government sector; and
- (c) how many are practicing in the private sector?

² HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I provide my response to Written Question No. 216/2026.

¹ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 215/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure I.

² Reply to Written Question No. 216/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure II.

Municipal Council Rates
(Question No. 217/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government inform Parliament of the municipal rates position separately for each of the 13 Municipal Councils for the year ended 31st December, 2023; 31st December, 2024; and 31st December, 2025; for the following, the –

- (a) total rates invoiced by each municipal council;
- (b) total rates collected by each municipal council; and
- (c) total outstanding rates and arrears for each municipal council, including the amount attributable to interest, together with the percentage rate collection achieved?

³ HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby table my response as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

Process to Secure iTaukei Land Leases
(Question No. 218/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources update Parliament on the process undertaken to secure iTaukei Leases for Government purposes, including the following –

- (a) the number of iTaukei leases currently secured through the iTaukei Land Trust Board;
- (b) how the Ministry maintains a database for Government iTaukei Leases including lease term, purposes, annual rentals, rental reviews and expiry dates; and
- (c) the total budgetary allocation for land rents payable to the iTaukei Land Trust Board for the 2026/2027 financial year?

⁴ HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby provide the response to the Written Question raised by honourable Tubuna.

Registered Complaints of Negligence from Surgical Procedures
(Question No. 219/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament on the total number of complaints and cases registered relating to alleged surgical errors, complications or medical negligence arising from surgical procedures, for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 July 2026, and to provide the following –

³ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 217/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure III.

⁴ Reply to Written Question No. 218/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure IV.

- (a) a breakdown of the complaints and cases by type of surgical procedure performed;
- (b) a breakdown of the complaints or cases by the hospital or health facility where the surgical procedure was performed; and
- (c) the number of complaints or cases that have been investigated and concluded, substantiated, dismissed or remain under investigation, including the number of cases currently before the courts?

⁵ HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby table my response to Written Question No. 219/2026.

Farm Access Roads under ROI Programme
(Question No. 220/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management update Parliament on Farm Access Roads constructed across the four Divisions from November 2025 to July 2026 under the Rural and Outer Island (ROI) Programme?

⁶ HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby table my response to Written Question No. 220/2026.

Compliance Audits Conducted Against Employers
(Question No. 221/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister of Finance update Parliament on the number of compliance audits conducted this year against employers who deduct but fail to remit FNPF contributions?

⁷ HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hereby table my response as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

Power Outages Recorded for Viti Levu
(Question No. 222/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport inform Parliament on the total number of hours of power outages recorded in Viti Levu for each of the following years –

- (a) 2023, 2024 and 2025; and

⁵ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 219/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure V.

⁶ Reply to Written Question No. 220/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure VI.

⁷ Reply to Written Question No. 221/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister of Finance, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure VII.

(b) from January to June 2026?

⁸ HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, I hereby table my response to Written Question No. 222/2026.

Motor Vehicle Fleet – Legal Aid Commission
(Question No. 223/2026)

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

Can the honourable Acting Attorney-General and Minister for Justice inform Parliament on the Legal Aid Commission's motor vehicle fleet for the period 1st January, 2023 to 31st July, 2026, and provide the –

- (a) total number of new motor vehicles purchased during this period, with a breakdown by make, model, year of purchase and purchase price for each vehicle;
- (b) total number of motor vehicles written off during this period, with a breakdown by make and model, year of write-off and the reason for each vehicle being written off; and
- (c) total number of motor vehicles disposed of through tender during this period, with a breakdown by make and model, year of disposal and final selling price for each vehicle?

⁹ HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, I hereby table my response to Written Question No. 223/2026.

Statistics on Remittances to Fiji - 2023 to 2026
(Question No. 224/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister of Finance provide Parliament with details of the –

- (a) total amount of remittances received from overseas from 2023 to 2025;
- (b) countries from which these remittances originated from; and
- (c) latest figures available for 2026?

¹⁰ HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, I will table my response at a later sitting date as permitted under Standing Order 45(3).

⁸ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 222/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Public Works and Meteorological Services and Transport, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure VIII.

⁹ Reply to Written Question No. 223/2026 tabled by the honourable Acting Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure IX.

¹⁰ Reply to Written Question No. 224/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister of Finance, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure X.

MARITIME POWERS BILL 2026

HON. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the -

- (a) Maritime Powers Bill 2026 (Bill No. 35/2026), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 1st October, 2026, but that one hour be given to debate the Bill with the Right of Reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

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

HON. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to seek the support of this august House for the consideration of the Maritime Powers Bill 2026. Under the conditions, as I have stipulated above under Standing Order 51, it is a legislation that is of fundamental importance to the security, prosperity and sovereignty of the Republic of Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, the urgency of this Bill arises, not from administrative convenience, but from the need to address a current and significant gap in Fiji's Maritime Security Framework. Criminal networks are already exploiting maritime routes. Our agencies are already operating at sea together. Our investments in maritime capability are beginning to take shape, some of which are already in place.

Mr. Speaker, what is missing is a modern unified legal framework to support those operations. Delaying this legislation prolongs legal uncertainty and increases the risk of failed interdictions, lost evidence, unsuccessful prosecutions and threats to our maritime sovereignty. Therefore accordingly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I request that the Maritime Powers Bill be considered under Standing Order 51, in the national interest.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the motion to take this Bill through Standing Order 51, for it to be presented today, which is a very big and a very important Bill, and I am looking at the number of Clauses that we have here - 68 Clauses. I have a Bill before me here, which had far less Clauses, but I want to show you what happened to this particular Bill.

I got the wrong Bill, Sir. The Referendum Bill, if you look at it, is just red, and red. So, the danger with all of this, I understand, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is that Government has carried out its consultations, but speeding things through Parliament like this, which does not give us enough time to be able to scrutinize it well. If you look at the Referendum Bill that came out, if you look at the colour of that Bill, I thought I hurt my hand.

This one, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is red. This is after good scrutiny. If you look inside the Bill, it is almost all red. If you look further inside the Bill here, this is all red. This is what comes out of scrutiny by Parliament, by Committee, all red as I am turning the pages.

I can understand the pressure that you have. The pressure is that we are almost at the end of the year, but by force-feeding these things through Parliament, we might be missing things that we could have picked up, as you can see from this particular Bill, and that is the danger. We want good

laws that are effective. Parliament, in its role, is to scrutinise. I know you are under pressure, why did this Bill not come earlier?

There can be all sorts of excuses, maybe a lack of drafters, but that is a problem to be solved. Now, we are force-feeding it through the system and at the end, if you have a shoddy process, you will get a shoddy output. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I do not endorse the suggestion that this should be presented today and debated this week.

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of the mover of the Bill this afternoon and I understand also the points that have been raised by honourable Usamate. There is a reason why Standing Order 51, in its form in the present Standing Order, does exist in previous Standing Orders, and I am sure that it also exists in Standing Orders of other Commonwealth countries. It is to facilitate urgent Bills based on context.

The reason why I stand in support of this is because when I hear honourable Usamate speak about the red pages, the context there is that it is really not the same as the Bill that is being proposed. We understand from the start that it was a very controversial Bill and quite rightly because it involves rights of people to exercise when they go into a referendum.

Honourable Usamate is saying that we are under pressure to push this through Parliament or force-feed this through Parliament and get the result because the term of Parliament or term of Government is coming to an end. That is not correct. I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, and I think honourable Usamate knows, that this Bill has been circulating since 2018.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- We asked the Commander of the Fiji Navy, “when was this Bill ever proposed initially?” They said that in 2018, they had tried to push it through. Right now, Mr. Speaker, the urgency as we speak is, we have a maritime border area of our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that is over 1.2 million square kilometres in total. That border, right now, is a transnational highway of everything that is bad, passing through the Pacific, feeding into the Pacific.

This is why this Bill is urgent because we need to operationalise the effort that we say is needed on the ground here. However, the facilitation of this we see on our streets; drugs exist on our streets, almost like in open sewers; HIV exist in our country also because of that, but this is the transnational highway. If our Navy personnel are not empowered to deal with transnational crimes through our sea borders, then I wonder why we are here.

We are going to be asking the question about lawmakers doing what lawmakers are supposed to do, and I reiterate again the point, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a reason why Standing Orders, in the shape of Standing Order 51, is there - it provides passage of a law that is required to be passed immediately because of its urgency, and this is one of them.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think the fact that you may stand and say that, “this Bill has been floating around since 2018”, but we have had four years of your Government, where was it? It should have come earlier. The problems that we face now are not something that have just come up with respect to enforcement in our maritime areas. It has not just come up now; it has been around for a little while.

All that is being said, and I think this side of the House actually realises how important this is, in terms of the machinery with respect to getting our borders safe. We realise how important it is, why did you not realise how important it was to bring it up early enough? Bad planning, bad

enforcement on your part as Government with respect to trying to do this. In any event, we still have a Parliament session to go. We have had Bills come by 51 and given to Committees within a couple of weeks to have it back, and so that we could do a thorough job with respect to it.

This particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, this also has a bearing on United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). These are things that are important that we need to make sure that we do the necessary grinding work that the Committees do, and it can be done in a couple of weeks; we have done it before. It was not as if it needs to be done in the next two days, it could have gone to the next parliamentary session where you just put the Committees under the thumb and get it done, and we have done it. We have sufficiently good Committees to do this work. Why was that path not chosen? Why is it that it is only a day that we get to read it and look at it, and then come back and debate it?

The point that was being raised by honourable Usamate with respect to the earlier Bills, with all the red in it, a thorough consultation exercise was done. In fact, that would have come back earlier also. But again, it had to go through so many different departments. This is something that is going to be set in stone, it protects us also. So, in order to get our protection right, we must make sure that we take it through the thorough process. No problem with 51. Do not blame some other government for it. No problem with 51, but it could have gone to the next parliamentary session to actually ensure that there was some consultation done by the Committees.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Mr. Speaker, we look at the history of our Parliament, especially the last Parliament, 91 percent of all the Acts were passed through Standing Order 51, and Standing Order 51 is there for a reason; urgency. There is urgency needed in this particular Bill. We have heard the honourable Minister addressing the House this afternoon.

The issue of drugs, the issue of transnational crimes, and all these kinds of criminal offences coming, especially with the loss of exhibits and these criminal mind activities, we need this to be urgently debated and passed in this House. If the previous Parliament can do it for those kinds of Bills which could have waited and followed the process, we should do this here. I think the Opposition should look at this very seriously, Mr. Speaker. With those few words, I support the motion.

HON. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Speaker, I thank all the honourable Members who have contributed and the arguments for and against Standing Order 51. I totally believe, given the urgency of the issues that are affecting Fiji and why we need to have this capability, particularly in the legal imperative to make all of our agencies work better together. It is important that we pass and consider this Bill at the earliest possible opportunity, and that is to be debated tomorrow, under the conditions of the motion as under Standing Order 51.

Let me just answer to my good friend, honourable Koya. We have not been sitting on these the last four years; we have not been. Mind you, we have done a lot of work regarding trying to secure our maritime security which has been kind of non-existent in many ways. The Maritime Security Strategy is coming out which ties up with this very well.

We recognise the vulnerabilities of our people that are out there in the water, trying to stop or interdict people that bring drugs to our country. We cannot argue the urgency of this matter, really because your argument seems to suggest that we have been sitting on it and only bringing it this time, but it is not. So, we cannot argue really, the urgency of this matter, your argument seems to suggest that we have been sitting on it and are only bringing it at this time, but that it is not really.

Also, perhaps, an answer for the red, the reds have been looking at these things since 2018,

honourable Member. And then over the last four years, we have looked at it as well. So, in terms of the consultations that have occurred already within Government and through the public where this draft Bill has already been taken, the urgency of it being actioned by Government is without doubt.

I would like to ask my learned friends again across the floor, please support this Bill under Standing Order 51 so we can bring some quick solutions. To think that you have started, and we now find it fit to conclude it for everyone.

MR. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Votes cast:

Ayes	- 31
Noes	- 14
Not Voted	- 8

Motion agreed to.

HIV/AIDS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2026

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the –

- (a) HIV/AIDS (Amendment) Bill 2026 (Bill No. 36/2026), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 1st October, 2026, but that one hour be given to debate the Bill with the right of reply given to me as the Member moving the motion.

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

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to speak on the HIV/AIDS (Amendment) Bill 2026 that will be considered without delay under Standing Order 51. The Government is seeking to use Standing Order 51 because the situation before us is one of urgent public health importance, requiring the legislative framework to be strengthened without delay.

We all know that Fiji is experiencing a generalised HIV epidemic, with injecting drug use contributing significantly to HIV infections. The Ministry has undertaken the necessary preparations to introduce harm reduction measures, including the provision of sterile needles and syringes.

However, the Ministry cannot lawfully commence this programme under the current legislative framework. The urgency, therefore, is not a question of resources or preparedness, the necessary commodities, service providers and operational arrangements are in place. The immediate constraint is the existing legal framework.

The proposed amendments are intended to provide the necessary legal authority and

protection to enable the Ministry and its authorised partners to implement a lawful Harm Reduction Programme. The Bill contains three Clauses, as follows:

- Clause 1 provides the commencement of the Act by notice in the gazette to allow the amendments to take effect promptly following assent.
- Clause 2 provides a clear legal definition of a Harm Reduction Programme, establishing what is meant by such a programme for the purpose of the Act.
- Clause 3 inserts a new section 46, empowering the Minister to direct the Ministry or the HIV/AIDS Board, or an authorised person, to implement the Harm Reduction Programme.

The Programme may provide sterile needles and syringes, condoms, pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis, facilities for the safe return of used equipment, counselling and awareness materials, and referral to treatment, rehabilitation and mental health services. Importantly, the proposed provision also establishes legal protection for persons delivering or receiving these services under an authorised programme, where the conduct is reasonably necessary for the operation of the programme and are undertaken in good faith.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to be clear about what these amendments do not do. They do not decriminalise drugs or reduce existing penalties for drug-related offences. They do not provide protection or conduct outside the authorised programme, otherwise than in good faith. The amendments are redirected at providing the legal authority necessary to implement the evidence-informed HIV harm reduction measures, and to ensure that health workers and programme participants can lawfully engage in those measures.

Given the urgency of the HIV situation and the need to enable the necessary public health response without further delay, I, therefore, seek the support of this House that the Bill be considered under Standing Order 51. I commend the motion to the House.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, at this juncture, I would like to thank the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services for bringing this particular amendment to the HIV/AIDS Act 2011. When we talk about HIV, we talk about drugs. Yes, we do agree that there is a crisis in place, a crisis that can destroy our youth, their future, and their families, because drug-related issue is not just confined to the person using it, but more so to the family and community at large.

This is one of the Bills that we expect to come under Standing Order 51, and there is an urgency. I would like to declare my interest as a pharmacy operator, because people walk into the pharmacies asking for needles and syringes, but there was some confusion. On one side, the Ministry was trying to distribute syringes and needles for free, and on the other side, there were police officers who were restricting pharmacies from selling those.

The only reservation that we have, and we might want to discuss this further, is anyone coming to get these needles for free or buying needles off the counter, and we know they are drug users. What are we going to do with these people who will enter the premises to get this for free, because it is red-handed that they are drug users, that is why they need needles, either to inject the drugs or blue tooting (taking out blood)?

This is something that we, as national leaders, need to have a national dialogue on, and see how best we can improve on this, come up with some solutions so that this should not be a final solution to reduce HIV/AIDS. What we need to ensure is how we can reduce the use of drugs with our youth in preventing their future.

With those words, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Opposition, we support the Bill before this august House.

MR. SPEAKER.- I presume he is speaking on all your behalf, honourable Usamate.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I have one point, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I just want to point out that this Bill has three Clauses, this has 68 Clauses. I want to point out another thing - think about this HIV, we have actually been consulted. They came here and delivered to us. On this side, all of us fully understand the issues; that is the difference.

This one, no consultation at all. It is not a laughing matter; this is a complete Bill. This one we support because we are sensible and because we know what is in here, because they took the time to come and consult us. We support it, Sir, but I wanted to make that clear. We are very sensible people.

HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, and I thank the comments that have been made by the honourable Members of the Opposition, especially the sensitivity part by honourable Usamate.

Sir, I have no further comments, and I commend the Bill to Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER.- The Parliament will now vote.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

BOSE LEVU VAKATURAGA BILL 2026

HON. I. VASU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I move the motion, I join the Members of this august House in expressing my deepest condolences on the passing of our colleague, the late honourable Inosi Kuridrani, who passed away on Sunday. I extend my sincere sympathies to his family.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also wish to acknowledge the sad loss of one of our own within the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs family, Mr. Joeli Tagicakibau, a 34-year-old staff member serving under the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission as a Surveyor. He passed away while on official duty in the Northern Division.

On behalf of the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and institutions under our portfolio, I extend our deepest sympathies and condolence to his family. May the souls of the late honourable Inosi Kuridrani and the late Joeli Tagicakibau rest in peace.

Mr. Speaker Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the -

- (a) Bose Levu Vakaturaga Bill 2026 (Bill No. 34/2026), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or any Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 1st October, 2026, but

that one hour be given to debate the Bill with the Right of Reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

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

HON. I. VASU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move this timetable so that Parliament can consider that message concerning the Bose Levu Vakaturaga. The Bose Levu Vakaturaga is an institution of great customary significance to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. Its legislative framework goes directly to the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs' responsibilities for iTaukei governance, traditional institutions, culture and heritage. It matters to the Councils, to the communities it serves, and to the way those institutions work with the Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question today is the timetable. Honourable Members will have the opportunity to examine and debate the Bill on its merit, as set out in the motion. I ask the House to agree on this stage of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible for iTaukei Affairs, I consider it important that Parliament have the opportunity to address this institutional framework during its present term. The motion I have moved sets out the procedure for doing so.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the honourable Members to support it, so that the Bill can receive considerations within the time available. I commend the motion to the House.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Sir, I just have a query, I did not get it, is it to be debated this week?

MR. SPEAKER.- I will let the Minister answer that.

HON. I. VASU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 1st October, 2026.

HON. J. USAMATE.- The Bose Levu Vakaturaga is, of course, something that has supreme significance, not only all *iTaukei* but to all the citizens of this country, for the role that they play. We have respect for our chiefs and the customary roles that they play in our country, and now that the Bill has come through, I do not think they ever had a law like this. This is the first of its kind and I am looking through the Clauses of the Bill, I have not had time to thoroughly scrutinise it.

I think, given that this is a new Bill, it would have been better, Mr. Speaker, Sir, if this was given to us for a month, put it to Committees, and it could be debated in the next round because this is a historic Bill. This Bill, when it is passed, will be a historical occasion. However, I, on my side, and I think most of the Members on this side, feel that if we were given more time, we could more thoroughly scrutinise it, not only for personal gratification, but to have the time to be able to look at the contents and see if there is anything there that is out of kilter that we might work on.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on that ground alone, they are hesitant in supporting the move have this debated this historical Bill which is a big Bill. This is a big law which encompasses and will impact on all the *iTaukei* in this country and not only the *iTaukei* but everyone in this country. The Great Council of Chiefs or the Bose Levu Vakaturaga, has an impact on everyone.

On that ground, Sir, in terms of Standing Order 51, we do not support the motion.

HON. I. VASU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the points that he has raised that coincide with the constitutional amendment process that we are doing now. We understand

that with the 1997 Constitution, it already encompasses the GCC and with this Bill, it will really support the *iTaukei* governance and all the people of Fiji.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COUNTER NARCOTICS BILL 2026

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 51, I move:

That the-

- (a) Counter Narcotics Bill 2026 (Bill No. 33/2026), be considered by Parliament without delay;
- (b) Bill must pass through one stage at a single sitting of Parliament;
- (c) Bill must not be referred to a Standing Committee or other Committee of Parliament; and
- (d) Bill must be debated and voted upon by Parliament on Thursday, 1st October, 2026, but that one hour be given to debate the Bill with the Right of Reply given to me as the Member moving this motion.

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

HON. I. NAIVALURUA - Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I begin, I wish to inform this august House that today is Police Remembrance Day, a solemn occasion where we honour the brave men and women of the Fiji Police Force, who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation. I ask that we continue to pray over the Police Commissioner, officers, men and women of the Fiji Police Force and their families as they continue to safeguard us, protect us and serve our nation diligently.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to seek urgent consideration for the Counter Narcotics Bill 2026 because Fiji is confronting a drug threat that has evolved rapidly and continues to do so, becoming more sophisticated and extending beyond what we have known as traditional drug enforcement. This rapidly changing landscape demands an urgent and considered response. Our laws must be strengthened and be capable of meeting the threat that exists today and tomorrow, not the threat that existed 20 years ago. This Bill comes at a pivotal moment for Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji's current legislative framework for addressing illicit drugs is principally based on the Illicit Drugs Control Act 2004 and the Dangerous Drugs Act 1938. These laws were enacted for a substantially different era. The contemporary drug landscape is now characterised by sophisticated and organised criminal networks, transnational trafficking operations, the movement of recursive chemicals and control equipment, robbery-laden financial crimes and money laundering, to name just a few of the evolving threats that Fiji faces today.

The current legislative framework does not provide the comprehensive institutional mechanisms required to address these developments in an integrated and effective manner. The Bill, therefore, represents a necessary legislative transition from a predominantly offence-based approach to a modern, coordinated and whole-of-nation counter-narcotic framework, capable of responding to the realities of the contemporary drug environment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the heart of this Bill is the establishment of the Counter Narcotics Bureau, a dedicated institution that will serve as Fiji's principal agency for coordinating national efforts,

developing specialised intelligence and investigative capabilities, strengthening partnership across Government and internationally, and advancing a comprehensive response to the growing narcotics threat, to name just a few of its important functions. Without the enactment of the Bill, the Government will face continuing limitations in the operationalisation of the Bureau as a legally established and properly mandated institution.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the longer the legislative response is delayed, the longer Fiji remains dependent on an outdated legal framework while the threat continues to evolve. I wish to be very clear about the Government is seeking the application of Standing Order 51. This request is not intended to avoid a Parliamentary scrutiny - it is intended to ensure that the legislative response is not unnecessarily delayed. The illicit drug challenge is no longer solely a law enforcement matter - it is a national crisis and a national security concern. Against this background, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the urgency before Parliament is clear.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I commend the Counter Narcotics Bill 2026 to Parliament. I, therefore, respectfully urge all honourable Members of this House to support its passage.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, do illicit drugs pose a significant threat to the health, safety, security, and wellbeing of the people of Fiji? Yes. Has there been a heightened use – heightened trafficking, cultivation, manufacture, use of illicit drugs and the involvement of transnational organised crime? Yes, absolutely! Has there been more exploitation of vulnerable persons and children and public health harms associated with illicit drug activity? Absolutely, yes! Are the current legislations that are in place – the Illicit Drugs Control Act 2004 and the Dangerous Drugs Act 1938 adequate to address the contemporary challenges that we have today? No.

We agree that there is a need for this Bill, there is no argument with that. There is no argument with the fact that we need the Bose Levu Vakaturaga Bill 2026. Absolutely, we need it! It is absolutely needed, but to bring a Bill of this size and magnitude, and you know that we had the Police Bill 2026 that was far smaller than this but it took us a long time, a lot of consultations with the representatives of the people in this Parliament going out to improve on that.

What this exercise, Mr. Speaker, is saying, it is almost saying that we do not really need a Parliament. It is almost like saying, “Government just makes the rules and you just glance at it, turn it to one or two pages, sleep, wake up, and approve the Bill.” That is the message that is coming through.

Look at this humongous Bill! Is it necessary? Is it urgent?

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Yes!

HON. J. USAMATE.- I agree with you. I agree that it is necessary. I agree that it is urgent, but this is the problem - your lack of execution, lack of planning, lack of being able to manage things. If this is important, why did it not come earlier in this august House so that the representatives of the people in this country had the opportunity to scrutinise it? As I have said, it is absolutely necessary.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Hogwash!

HON. J. USAMATE.- For instance, in this Referendum Bill, we gave it to the Office of Solicitor-General - five months, April to May to June to July to August, September, five months before it came back.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- A Point of Order, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER.- Point of Order!

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 60 on relevance. We are talking about the Counter Narcotics Bill, but the honourable Member is coming up with a Referendum Bill.

MR. SPEAKER.- Your point is taken. Honourable Usamate, stick to the Bill.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Thank you, Sir, I am sticking to the Bill. I used the Referendum Bill as an example, but you need to get the drift.

We agree that this is an urgent problem. We agree that it is absolutely critical. You have had four years.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBERS.- You had 16 years.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Yes, we did have 16, but we are not in government anymore. Are you saying that just because we took 16 years that you should take the same? It is like you are saying that, "No, the people on that side of the House used to protest every time that we use Standing Order 51."

When you were in government, we never protested, but as soon as you go on the other side, you are the very people that protested. If you say something and you do the opposite, what does that make you? Answer! What does that make you? You say something and you do the opposite, what does that make you?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think a Bill of this magnitude, brought to the House and to ask us to debate it in two days' time, is saying that we do not need Parliament to pass Bills. That is why, Sir, if the Government had done its job well and posted it earlier, this could have been done and you could be debating it, at least, in the next sitting in November. That would give the representatives of the people in this House the opportunity to scrutinise it in a much better and more organised fashion. This week, we cannot really scrutinise it because we are getting ready for the Amendment Bill, that Bill, that Bill, that Bill, and that Bill, so we cannot spend a lot of time on this particular Bill. Because of that reason, Sir, we do not support Standing Order 51. Look at this humongous Bill. We cannot do it in two days.

No, it cannot be my *tau*, it must be the people that have drafted it. You are the ones who need to work faster. Get on the job! If you do not have enough people, find them. Get the job done! Execute! We want results, outcome, and outputs. Make a difference. Stop gallivanting and talking about this and that being all over the place.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we do not support Standing Order 51.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just heard one honourable Member say that people are watching - yes, definitely. I would say that they were watching for the past 12 years as well.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we do realise the urgency of the Bill. I have always stood in this Parliament, and whenever things came under Standing Order 51, I never objected. The reason being that there is Standing Order 51, which can be used from time to time and it has been. However, there are two parts to Standing Order 51 - it can be debated in a single sitting, or it can be fast-tracked through a

committee within 30 days and brought back to Parliament. That is still under Standing Order 51.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us be honest. All the honourable Members sitting here know that it is almost 6.00 p.m. today. We are expected to scrutinise this Bill and pass it within 48 hours. We have been running late in Parliament. We have almost eight Bills to debate on Thursday, for which we have to prepare ourselves. How many of us will be able to read this Bill, with its 200 pages from A to Z, and prepare to debate it on Thursday? Let us be honest to ourselves.

Can we do it, knowing that we have to scrutinise eight more Bills on Thursday? What would be the harm, Mr. Speaker, Sir, of giving this Bill to a Committee for 30 days under Standing Order 51? Let them have a look at it. Bring it back in the November Sitting, and we pass this Bill as a matter of urgency. There is, no doubt, that the whole of Government and Opposition will support this kind of Bill because this is an urgent matter.

However, there are provisions within our Standing Orders that allows for it to go to the Committee stage for scrutiny. We all know that whichever Bill has gone to a committee has come back with a bipartisan report. There has not been a single time where we have had a minority report, or honourable Members not signing a particular report because they did not agree. There may be one or two clauses that honourable Members might not agree with, so voting can be done on those. However, the reports that came back, and I would say 100 percent of the reports that came back to Parliament, were done on a bipartisan basis.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I urge that this is a very important matter. As I have stated when I was giving my comments with regards to the HIV/AIDS Bill, it is a crisis, and that crisis is because of what is happening in terms of drugs. Let us give this particular Bill, under Standing Order 51, to a committee for scrutiny, and let us debate this Bill during the November Sitting.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to object to the use of Standing Order 51, and I would like to remind everyone that this morning, the honourable Speaker reminded USP students about how laws are made, and I was very proud - it was a learning for the students. When one of the honourable Members presented his Committee Report, it very clearly explained how laws are made. I am so glad that those students are not sitting here now, because if they would have been sitting here, they will not be trusting the process we are using in this Parliament, to be honest.

(Hon. Government Members interjected)

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- *Areh*, let me speak!

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am talking to you, not to them. The point that I would like to make here is, when the Committee goes through such Bills, they present the Committee report. When you go through the Committee report, you basically understand what is in the Bill and why they did this and that because it comes with a lot of thinking, a lot of discussion and a lot of consultation, et cetera.

The Bill is thoroughly scrutinised and when it comes to this House, it becomes easier to debate. However, with these 200-pages Bill, and as one of my colleagues has said earlier on, with eight Bills to be debated on Thursday, I thought I was intelligent, but today I give up, Sir. How on earth are we going to read this Bill, and not only this Bill but the other Bills, considering that we are in Parliament everyday, we go home very late, we are tired and then we have to read this. Of course, as representatives of the people, we surely have to do that. Never mind if our sleep is only for two hours or three hours, but we have to do that.

I hope you understand that this Bill, an important piece of legislation which has not gone to the people, would have helped in awareness raising. It would have helped the public to know that there is a Bill which is being planned by Parliament or is being discussed by Parliament. There are different sections and there would have been more awareness raising through the consultation process, so we have missed all the opportunities here. The only thing we are doing here is the Bill, read it, come on Thursday, let us debate. That is not how laws are made.

HON. S.D. TURAGA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in reply to honourable Usamate, I think his comments against drafters are unfair. You have to take it back. The drafters are very passionate about their work. They do not sit and watch TV and read books. Apart from the Referendum Bill, they do other things. It is so unfair to try and label our lawyers and the Office of the Solicitor-General for taking their time to do the work.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the previous government, in the Budget Bills, introduced significant changes to the law affecting the *iTaukei*. We were not given opportunity to comment on those Bills. This time around, we are giving an opportunity to look at this Bill. We all understand the situation we are in. Sometimes I think it is best to be like Donald Trump – just make a decision!

This is the time that this nation needs to move and make a decision. You did not do anything. We fix the security mechanism you are talking about, and this is real. What we face is what we had inherited. We have the ability to look and comment, and most of these are not entirely novel - they are part of the same laws put into the process. There was a huge consultation done and we need to move on.

The honourable Minister for Policing is relying on this Bill so that his new department can move on and take some key decisions, otherwise, it is all talk. I fully support the Bill, and I think it is justified under Standing Order 51 to bring it so.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this would be my first time standing and explaining my reasons, and why I have to expose this Government's intention of using Standing Order 51. During the 2022 Elections, most of my political friends sitting on the other side and most politicians were campaigning that we will be different and we will consult the people all the time.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, Sir, looking at the size of this Bill and explained by our honourable colleagues from the Opposition, they need time, they need to take this to the people and consult with them as well. I also understand there were a few comments made by the honourable Prime Minister before as well that the Attorney-General is a bit slow.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we do not have the resources in our Parliamentary Office to analyse this Bill within 48 hours. Unlike the honourable Ministers sitting on the other side, they have the resources, the staff, and may have speechwriters as well who can analyse this and prepare a speech for Thursday. However, for the Opposition, Sir, it is just us, the 15 Members - I, as an independent Member, and the others in G13. I think the other Members in G11 are part of the Coalition Government, so they will be supporting this Bill but for us, we represent the Opposition. Therefore, we have to look at the silent majority of people who are in our country.

This Bill needs to go to the people; we need to consult them as you promised during your re-election campaign. Let us not lie to the people of Fiji. Let us not betray the trust they bestowed on us during the elections, and we know that the elections are coming up again. They are asking the same question. What do you promise in 2022?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not support this motion.

HON. F.W.R. VOSAROGO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I stand in support of honourable Naivalurua and the Bill moved under Standing Order 51 to be passed without delay on Thursday.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the honourable Minister for Policing has not taken this step lightly. We, as a government, have continued to respect the reason why Parliament exists. We have continued to respect its processes and to respect also the scrutiny role that this Parliament has. Over and above that, I think what has been lost in this afternoon's debate is that we also, as part of Government, respect something else and that is, the urgency of the crisis that sits before us.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is an attempt to make sure that we no longer give more time for narcotics to grow and thrive in our country without having the establishment and the framework that is required to curb it.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the justification for the urgency in tonight's motion, Standing Order 51 exists for moments such as this and exists for Bills such as this. It is not a tool of convenience, like the 91 percent of laws that they passed during their time, but it is a tool of necessity. That necessity, Sir, is undeniably here. We are dealing with that necessity here.

Just a few minutes ago, the honourable Acting Attorney-General stood and berated the fact that we have lost 31 kilogrammes of cocaine in one of Fiji's supposedly High Court Registry Exhibit Room. That is something that comes at the back end of what we are trying to do. First, we secured the maritime borders. Now, we set up security parameters on land and ensure that, that framework exists and is able to be given legal validation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the threat here is immediate and is also escalating. We all understand that Fiji is dealing with a drug crisis that is not waiting for us to complete our processes. The Bill that establishes the Counter Narcotics Bureau is now going to be a standalone independent body coordinating national efforts against illicit drugs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, everyone here would have understood or noted that in this year's Budget, \$1.6 million has been set aside to make sure that once this setup is legally done through the legal framework, then they have the money that will be able to set them to do what they are required to do.

Mr. Speaker, there has been consultation and the Police have done their consultation throughout the country. The point that has been raised by Opposition Members is the fact that now, they do not have the proper scrutiny prior to the Bill being passed. So, that is exactly why Standing Order 51 exists, because it allows for a reversal role of our parliamentary process. The Standing Orders will then be able to vet how the Counter Narcotics Bureau, after it is operationalised, is now doing. You can call the Minister, you can call the Director General, you can call anyone to find out how they are operationalising the Bill. Standing Order 51 is really just a turnaround of procedure, whereby you now have the scrutiny process after the Bill has been enacted.

Mr. Speaker, there is a huge public interest in making sure that this Bill passes through the floor of Parliament, not next month, but in two days' time, because the framework is ready, the urgency exists, and we need to curb that urgency. We are here, as legislators, and we need to rise up to the occasion and say, "We are going to support this." So, I am asking my colleagues, honourable Usamate and I think honourable Ketan Lal have pointed to the fact that this Bill has many, many sections, and they would not have time to run through it.

What they have not realised, Mr. Speaker, is that there are very senior lawyers sitting in their ranks. A very senior lawyer will be able to go through this Bill, and I am sure that he will be able to provide them with some advice on how they could respond to the Bill on Thursday. They should not

underestimate honourable Koya, because he is one of the most brightest brains around, and I sure that he can give them advice.

They should not be giving that kind of excuse. So, I am asking again, Mr. Speaker, and I am pleading with the honourable Leader of the Opposition and the remaining Members, to see the urgency of this Bill and support it today and support it on Thursday. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, just because the honourable Minister for Lands has asked for my support, I decided that I would stand and make a contribution as well, apart from the senior Advisor that we have here. I think, given the rate and how Government is bringing these Bills into Parliament, we need an AI policy here. We badly need AI to do the interpretation and analysis for us, and the Minister is also Minister for Communications. Perhaps, he should bring that together with this Bill, because our small brains do not have the capacity to absorb all these within this very short period.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we understand the urgency, there is a need, but the world will not collapse if we do not pass this Bill on Thursday. It is just about the process, and I am pleading with the honourable Prime Minister and the honourable Minister, let us bring this Bill back, again, in November.

I just had a quick glance at the Bill. In Clause 23, it talks about the Accountability and Transparency Commission. I was in the office today and I asked him, what has happened to the Code of Conduct? Clause 23, Sir, talks about both the Accountability and Transparency Commission and the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct has been sitting in the Solicitor-General's Office now for years, but it is here in the Bill. Under Section 121 of the Constitution, it has never.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this side of the House would know that I had asked the former Attorney-General about this in one of our caucus meetings. I remember in May 2023, I had asked about the Accountability and Transparency Commission. It is there in the Constitution but has not been activated but it is already here in the Bill. That is probably why we just gave one month.

As I have said, the world is not going to collapse. I understand the complexity in this because I was looking at Clause 170 of the Bill as well that deals with special requirements for children under 14 years of age. This was one of the delays. I know all the work undertaken because they are now used to trafficking drugs but you very well understand this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as a Judge because even the judicial machinery, we had a lot of discussions on this back then in the Ministry of Defence and National Security. I just picked a few, so I urge the honourable Prime Minister and the honourable Minister, it is still under Standing Order 51 but November, just to give the Committee time to scrutinise the Bill. That is my short contribution.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to support the honourable Minister's motion this evening. Just to continue from, honourable Vosarogo, I believe there is an urgency in this Bill. I cannot emphasise more that there is an urgency in Fiji. I do not know whether the Opposition are listening to the news and all that.

(Honourable Member interjected)

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- I am addressing, Mr. Speaker, and not you!

The honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services has declared a State of Emergency for HIV/AIDS, drugs and all these issues. The honourable Leader of the Opposition is talking about the Code of Conduct Bill and the Accountability and Transparency Commission, which was in the 2013 Constitution, but nothing was done by the past government. This Government has, at least, brought up this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if you look at the *Bible* in the Book of Matthew, it talks about hypocrisy. You are trying to preach something, but your actions speak the opposite. That is hypocrisy. So, Sir, may I be allowed to speak in the vernacular.

Ni vakarorogo saka tiko mai na ena yakavi e daidai, na Matanitu Cokovata e sega ni kauta mai vakaveitalia na lawa ena ruku ni lawa ni Standing Order 51. E tiko na gauna ena qai vakayagataka kina na Matanitu Cokovata na Standing Order 51, me vaka taka na veika vakadomobula esa yacovi Viti tu e daidai.

E sega ni vakidroa vei au na ka eratou vakaraitaka tiko na i To ni Veisaqa. Eratou na sega ni tara vakabibi na veika me baleti keda na i Taukei, ena tara na noda kawa, vuvale, koro kei na i tikotiko. Na maruana kei na veika esa yali tu 'qo e na Exhibit Room, ena tarovi vakacava?

[Sir, the Coalition Government does not introduce legislation lightly under Standing Order 51. There are times when the Coalition Government will invoke Standing Order 51, as is appropriate, given the alarming situation Fiji is facing today.

I am not surprised by what the Opposition is saying. The consequences will not affect only us, the indigenous Fijians, in a significant way; they will affect our future generations, our families, our villages, and our communities. How will marijuana and the other items that have now gone missing from the Exhibit Room be controlled or prevented from disappearing?]

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, a Point of Order!

MR. SPEAKER.- Yes.

HON. J. USAMATE.- The honourable Member said that we are not supporting the Bill. He said that in *iTaukei* that we are not supporting. Just to make it clear that we support the Bill, but we do not support this motion about Standing Order 51. The honourable Member is saying that we do not support all these. He must be told to say the right thing.

MR. SPEAKER.- I am not quite sure and I am with you. Can you just, please, explain what he was saying, again?

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I was just saying that the Opposition is not taking the issue that is affecting Fiji now very seriously. I am talking about all the issues of....

MR. SPEAKER.- I can understand now that you qualified it, honourable Usamate.

HON. J. USAMATE.- When I began my speech, I pointed out the importance of this issue that it is a crisis, and it is absolutely urgent. I pointed that out at the beginning of my speech. He is now saying that we do not support the Bill.

I made the statement that we support the Bill, but not the way in which it is coming through for debate. He has gone out and spoken in *iTaukei*, telling everyone in this country that we do not support the Bill. *Ni rogoca tiko, keitou na i To ni Veisaqa keitou sega ni saqata na Bill 'qo, keitou saqata tikoga na gaunanisala e kau tiko mai kina.*

[To all the viewers who are listening, the Opposition supports the Bill, however, we do not support the method that it is being tabled.]

MR. SPEAKER.- You are speaking now, please, take a seat. You were only supposed to say

what your Point of Order is. You are not to indulge more into what you are saying. I am sorry, I apologise to you as well. Can we go back?

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, may I be allowed?

MR. SPEAKER.- Can you qualify what you said by admitting to the fact that the Opposition are not opposed to the Bill? It is the method of bringing it into force, that is the issue. Please, go ahead, honourable Member.

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- In *iTaukei*, Mr. Speaker?

MR. SPEAKER.- Yes, absolutely!

HON. RATU J.B. NIUDAMU.- *Ni vakarorogo saka tiko mai na lewe ni noda vanua. Turaga saka na Speaker, au sega saka ni tukuna ni ratou saqata na mosoni 'qo, au via vakaraitaka tikoga na cava na i balebale ni nona kauta cake tiko mai kina na Matanitu na lawa 'qo ena Standing Order 51.*

Na i balebale ni kena kauta cake tiko mai na lawa ena vuku ni Standing Order 51 baleta na veika sa yaco tiko vei keda na kawa i Taukei, ka vaka kina na lewe i Viti e daidai. Na veika me baleta na noda tiko vakoro, na maroroi ni kawa i Taukei, na veika sa yaco tu me baleta na marijuana, ice, methamphetamine, na vei mataqali karasi, na vei mataqali wainimate gaga, AIDS sa tu 'qo i Viti, me vaka e tukuna tiko na Turaga na Minister ni Bula.

Oya sara ga na vuna au tokona kina na veika sa tukuna tiko na Turaga na Minister ni Ovisa, honourable Naivalurua. E kau saka mai me vakatolotolotaki na kena gadrevi me veivosakitaki ena Vale ni Boselawa baleta mo ni rawa ni taqomaki na lewenivanua. O koya sara ga oya na ka au via vakaraitaka, Turaga na Sipika."

[Mr. Speaker, and to those who are listening, I am not saying that they oppose this motion. I simply want to explain the meaning and purpose of the Government bringing this law forward under Standing Order 51.

The reason for bringing this law forward under Standing Order 51 is because of the issues currently affecting us as indigenous Fijians, as well as the people of Fiji today. These include matters relating to our village communities, the preservation of indigenous Fijians, and the problems we are facing with marijuana, ice, methamphetamine, various types of drugs, and AIDS, which is now present in Fiji, as the honourable Minister for Health has stated.

That is precisely why I support the points raised by the honourable Minister for Policing, honourable Naivalurua. This matter has been brought forward urgently so that it can be discussed in Parliament, enabling the people to be protected. That is exactly the point I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker.]

With those few words, I support the motion.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we all know that there is an emergency in Fiji about HIV and drugs that is likely to impact on tourism. When it was declared about a week or two ago, it made it to CNN and BBC which have global coverage. Now, as you can imagine, being a Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, I expressed my anxiety when we decided to declare this emergency.

We were briefed on what is happening, and it is true that we need to be clear on this, to be

serious about HIV and AIDS. However, what the market out there wants to see is what is Fiji doing about its HIV and drug problems. We cannot hide it. We now live in an age of transparency. The world is global, we cannot hide from this, but HIV and drugs are global phenomena. If we are upfront and we do not sweep it under the carpet, people will respect us. People will say, “This is a country where the values are intact, that I am going to visit this country, and they are not hiding anything from me.” So, it has worked.

In spite of the emergency, in spite of CNN and BBC, hotels are still full and the airlines are still full, because they know that they can trust the people of Fiji that they will do the needful. Part of that is for us to tell them what we are doing about the threat. The HIV/AIDS (Amendment) Bill 2026, the Maritime Powers Bill 2026 to combat trans-shipment in the seas, and this Counter Narcotics Bill 2026 is telling the world that we are doing something about the threat of HIV and drugs.

To my colleagues on the other side of the House, that is why we have this sense of urgency. The tourism community wants to see this done. That is why we need the support to pass this and do it in the quickest way possible.

HON. I. NAIVALURUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can just sense a great energy inside the House this evening. My point really is, we are able to thread all this energy together and point to the right direction that Government is pointing to, which is heading north instead of heading south, or east or west, and all we are talking about on this Bill is, I believe, it is achievable.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, not long ago, we were down there south, in 2023. The Government saw the situation, assessed the situation and decided on the way forward, which we all know was the Counter Drug Strategy 2023-2028. We have come that far under the leadership of the Minister for Policing then, honourable Tikoduadua, and we are now in the House, debating a very, very important Bill.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard, even the Minister who are standing here. I have two copies of the Counter Narcotics Bill 2026, which I printed. One stays in my office and one at home, which I read, and likewise, the team that have really worked hard in producing the product we are debating this evening.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the way forward is heading up north. I thank all the honourable Members that have contributed to the debate this evening. As the Minister responsible, I look forward to the passage of this Bill to the next stage, which is the substantive debate on Thursday.

Question put.

MR. SPEAKER.- There being opposition, Parliament will vote on the motion.

Votes cast:

Ayes	-	32
Noes	-	13
Abstained	-	8

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of today's sitting. I know this evening has been a very passionate, very open discussion. I thank you all for your contributions. Parliament will be adjourned until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 6.54 p.m.

ANNEXURE I

Reply to Written Question No. 215/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry (Ref. Page 2052)



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

Reply to Question No. 215/2026 is as follows:

I thank the honourable Member for raising the three questions on the update of pine sales in Lakeba. The responses are as follows:

- (a) The commercial pine harvesting on Lakeba in the Lau Group had just commenced in June 2026. This represents an important milestone for the landowners and communities of Lakeba. The harvesting operation for that matter is still in its early stages. However, the necessary commercial, governance, infrastructure and benefit-sharing arrangements are being established to ensure that the benefits arising from the pine resource are returned equitably to the landowners and communities of Lakeba, including all eight Villages and *Yavusas*.

Accordingly, no revenue from commercial pine sales was earned by any of the *Yavusas* of Lakeba during 2023, 2024 or 2025. Prior to 2026, the mature pine resource on Lakeba remained largely unharvested due to the absence of the necessary commercial entity, logistical infrastructure and governance arrangements.

The foundation for commercial harvesting was established through several key developments:

- Lakeba Nexus Holdings Pte Ltd was formally registered as the commercial arm of the Tikina.
- Logging machinery was handed over on 30th May, 2026, by the Ministry of Forestry and the Fiji Pine Trust.
- A portable sawmill, valued at approximately \$60,000, was handed over on 18th June, 2026, by the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development.
- Commercial deliveries commenced on 22nd June, 2026.

Actual Deliveries from Lakeba Pine Operations (22nd June, 2026 -18th September, 2026)

Since operations commenced, the following deliveries have been recorded:

No.	DATE	VOLUME (M ³)	LOG COUNT	COMMENTS
1	22 nd June, 2026	32.866	451	Pine Peeled Post
2	2 nd July, 2026	39.612	39	Raw Sawlog
3	16 th July, 2026	49.072	78	Raw Sawlog
4	1 st August, 2026	32.020	147	Saw logs and Post
5	16 th August, 2026	42.162	618	Saw logs and Post
6	6 th September, 2026	19.082	397	Post
7	18 th September, 2026	28.222	571	Post
TOTAL		283.036m³	2,301 Logs	

Estimated Overall Cost (based on \$750 per m³): 283.036m³ x \$750 = \$212,277

This confirms that the operation is now active and delivering logs for processing and sale. At the applicable royalty rate of \$30 per cubic metre, approximately \$8,491 in royalties had

accrued to the Lakeba Trust from these deliveries.

It is important to clarify that these operations are only at the commencement stage and, therefore, there is not yet three-year history of commercial revenue available for distribution among the individual *Yavusas*.

- (b) The benefits from the Lakeba pine resource over the 2026-2030 period will be delivered through a number of mechanisms.
- (i) Royalty Payments
A royalty of \$30 per cubic metre is payable to the Lakeba Trust on pine supplied to Tropik Wood Industries Limited and the Wainiyabia Sawmill. Based on current projections, approximately \$4.6 million in royalties could accrue to the Lakeba Trust over five years.
 - (ii) Employment and Wages
The operation is creating employment for logging crews, sawmill operators, transport workers and administrative staff. Salaries and wages for the core operational team are budgeted at approximately \$400,000 per annum.
 - (iii) Community Enterprise Development
Support will include training in financial literacy, business planning and forestry operations, together with support for women- and youth-led enterprises linked to the pine value chain.
 - (iv) Infrastructure Development
Government and its partners are supporting infrastructure that will enable the pine industry to operate more efficiently and generate greater returns for Lakeba. This includes:
 - the Wainiyabia Jetty, with \$2 million allocated in the 2026-2027 National Budget, which will improve transport and market access;
 - a 14-kilometre forward road to facilitate systematic harvesting and extraction;
 - renovation of the Wainiyabia Sawmill; and
 - improvements including staff housing at Ratu Mara College.
 - (v) Dividends from the Commercial Operation
Subject to approval of the Dividend Policy, 25 percent of net profits for 2027- 2029 and 30 percent from 2030 is proposed to be paid to the Lakeba Trust for distribution to the eight villages.
 - (vi) Dual Management Arrangement
Approximately 30 percent of the total pine volume will be managed under the Fiji Pine Limited agreement, ensuring alignment with national forestry standards, while 70 percent will be operated by Lakeba Nexus Holdings, which will oversee harvesting, processing and local value-chain development.
- (c) The sharing of benefits from the pine resource is to be governed through a formal institutional and trust framework designed to protect landowner interests and provide for equitable distribution. The Board of Trustees represents the collective interests of the Tikina and safeguards the rights of the landowners.

The Lakeba Nexus Holdings Board of Directors is responsible for the commercial operations and strategic decisions of the company, including consideration and approval of the Dividend Policy. Once approved, the Dividend Policy will establish the basis for the distribution of net profits to

the Lakeba Trust. The current proposed dividend arrangement is 25 percent of net profits for 2027-2029 and 30 percent from 2030.

The Lakeba Trust will then distribute benefits to the eight villages and *Yavusa* in accordance with its Trust Policy and Manual, taking into account land ownership and customary rights. In addition, under the Fiji Pine Trust framework, 85 percent of royalties and premiums are returned to the proprietary unit or landowning group, with the remaining portion distributed to traditional leaders in accordance with the applicable land trust arrangements.

Government Support and Infrastructure

To date, Government's total investment in Lakeba pine infrastructure comprising the logging machinery, portable sawmill and related support is approximately \$500,000, in addition to the \$2 million allocated for the Wainiyabia Jetty under the 2026-2027 National Budget.

Comparison: Kadavu Harvesting

For context, the Kadavu and Gau Maritime Pine Project commenced earlier and has since paid approximately \$1.53 million in direct benefits to about 1,500 landowners. These funds have been used for housing, school fees, small businesses and village infrastructure. This demonstrates that once full-scale logging is established with reliable transport, processing facilities and market linkages, landowners can expect meaningful and sustained returns. Lakeba is now on the same trajectory, with harvesting underway and the enabling infrastructure being put in place.

Lakeba's commercial pine harvesting has only recently commenced. Therefore, there was no commercial pine revenue to distribute among the *Yavusa* during 2023-2025. Since the commencement of operations in June 2026, 283.036 cubic metres of pine, comprising 2,301 logs, have been delivered, with approximately \$8,491 in royalties accrued to the Lakeba Trust. As harvesting scales up, the benefits to the people of Lakeba will come through royalties, employment and wages, dividends, community enterprise development, infrastructure investment and reinvestment into the local value chain.

The Government's objective is to ensure that the development of the Lakeba pine resource provides sustainable economic opportunities while respecting the rights, interests and customary ownership of the landowners, and ensuring that the benefits are shared through the established Lakeba Trust and governance arrangements.

ANNEXURE II

Reply to Written Question No. 216/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources (Ref. Page 2052)



MINISTER FOR LANDS AND MINERAL RESOURCES
(Hon. F.W.R. Vosarogo)

Reply to Question No. 216/2026 is as follows:

The Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources, through the Surveyors Registration Board (SRB), is responsible for the regulation of the land surveying profession in Fiji in accordance with the Surveyors Act 1969. The SRB maintains the register of Registered Surveyors authorised to practise in Fiji.

As of September 2026, there is a total of 48 Registered Surveyors in Fiji. The breakdown by employment sector is as follows:

Employment Sector	Number of Registered Surveyors
Government Sector	16 (33%)
Private Sector (Statutory Organisation/ Private company/Tertiary Institution)	32 (67%)
Total Registered Surveyors	48

The Ministry continues to support the development of the surveying profession through professional training, capacity building, registration processes and the strengthening of professional standards.

Recognising that Registered Surveyors play a critical role in both the public and private sectors, the Ministry supports their work in land administration, infrastructure growth, land registration, and boundary dispute resolution across the nation.

Moving forward, the Ministry will maintain its close partnership with the Surveyors Registration Board (SRB) to keep an accurate registry of qualified professionals and ensure the industry has the capacity to meet Fiji's evolving land development demands.

ANNEXURE III

Reply to Written Question No. 217/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government (Ref. Page 2053)



MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. M.K. Nalumisa)

Reply to Question No. 217/2026 is as follows:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, pursuant to Standing Order 45(3), I provide the response to Written Question No. 217 of 2026.

The information requested covers all 13 Municipal Councils for the financial years 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, taking into consideration that the financial year for Municipal Councils cover from August to July each year. The information includes the total rates invoiced, total rates collected, total outstanding rates and arrears, including the amount attributable to interest, and the percentage of rates collection achieved by each Council.

Rates Collection Assessment Summary Dashboard – 13 Municipal Councils Financial Years 2022/2023, 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 collections											
Council	FY Period	Opening Arrears Revised - (A)	Annual Rates Due/Billed (\$)	Revised Collectable Revenue	Total Current Rates Collected	Total Arrears Collection	Total Rates Collection	Closing Arrears	Audit Status	collection rate (%) current	collection rate (%) arrears
Seymour City Council	FY 2022/2023	\$29,481,639.98	\$16,549,751.53	\$48,031,391.51	\$14,621,115.71	3,263,650.20	18,104,765.91	29,926,625.60	Unaudited	80%	11%
	FY 2023/2024	\$30,924,551.82	\$19,494,957.89	\$50,419,509.71	\$15,708,214.00	2,935,779.00	18,643,993.00	31,775,516.71		81%	9%
	FY 2024/2025	\$33,555,153.86	\$19,684,218.99	\$53,242,372.85	\$16,270,798.00	3,608,345.00	19,879,143.00	33,363,229.86		83%	11%
	FY 2022/2023	\$1,206,028.00	\$520,763.16	\$1,728,791.16	\$421,300.25	68,318.00	459,616.25	1,239,174.91	Audited	81%	6%
Lami Town Council	FY 2023/2024	\$1,239,175.00	\$549,428.02	\$1,788,604.02	\$473,788.00	113,740.00	587,528.00	1,201,076.02	Unaudited	86%	9%
	FY 2024/2025	\$1,201,076.02	\$634,346.00	\$2,035,424.02	\$775,078.00	180,902.00	955,976.00	1,079,446.02	Unaudited	93%	15%
	FY 2022/2023	\$9,909,008.46	\$2,954,985.81	\$12,863,994.07	\$1,686,807.96	1,180,285.55	2,767,093.51	10,096,900.56	Unaudited	54%	12%
	FY 2023/2024	\$10,096,900.56	\$3,124,947.29	\$13,221,847.85	\$1,694,911.00	1,106,609.00	2,801,520.00	10,420,327.85		54%	11%
Nasirou Town Council	FY 2024/2025	\$10,420,327.85	\$3,125,712.78	\$13,546,040.60	\$1,769,960.03	1,922,140.62	3,692,120.65	9,853,919.95		57%	18%
	FY 2022/2023	\$4,185,420.23	\$1,504,808.25	\$5,690,228.48	\$1,504,883.29	609,228.84	2,113,011.83	3,576,316.55		100%	15%
Nausori Town Council	FY 2023/2024	\$3,576,316.55	\$1,503,163.06	\$5,079,479.61	\$681,858.00	429,392.00	1,111,250.00	3,968,229.61	Unaudited	45%	12%
	FY 2024/2025	\$3,968,229.61	\$1,472,529.07	\$5,440,758.68	\$880,997.25	777,416.03	1,658,413.28	3,782,345.40		60%	19%
Sigatoka Town Council	FY 2022/2023	\$204,255.00	\$350,732.97	\$554,957.97	\$268,842.80	173,188.02	441,830.82	113,157.15	Unaudited	77%	85%
	FY 2023/2024	\$113,157.15	\$364,933.31	\$478,090.46	\$343,161.60	79,846.01	422,007.61	55,282.85		94%	70%
	FY 2024/2025	\$55,282.85	\$436,374.47	\$491,657.32	\$410,847.91	70,677.72	481,525.63	10,131.69		94%	128%
	FY 2022/2023	\$2,786,300.85	\$2,698,649.40	\$5,484,950.25	\$2,052,464.25	487,588.52	2,540,052.77	2,944,497.48	Unaudited	76%	18%
Nadi Town Council	FY 2023/2024	\$3,045,440.87	\$2,846,684.75	\$5,892,125.62	\$1,843,762.44	441,586.46	2,285,748.90	3,606,376.72		65%	15%
	FY 2024/2025	\$3,639,318.75	\$2,845,682.18	\$6,485,000.93	\$2,059,944.11	538,743.47	2,598,687.58	3,888,313.35		72%	15%
Lautoka City Council	FY 2022/2023	\$11,623,441.88	\$5,094,919.52	\$16,718,361.40	\$2,749,357.00	1,307,358.00	4,056,715.00	12,661,646.40	Unaudited	54%	11%
	FY 2023/2024	\$12,661,646.40	\$5,393,670.00	\$18,055,316.40	\$2,316,226.00	754,140.00	3,072,366.00	14,862,950.40		43%	6%
	FY 2024/2025	\$14,982,950.40	\$5,390,480.00	\$20,373,430.40	\$2,842,657.00	1,107,754.00	3,950,411.00	16,423,019.40		53%	7%
	FY 2022/2023	\$1,400,190.37	\$802,850.00	\$2,203,040.37	\$655,842.20	210,206.48	866,048.68	1,336,991.68	Unaudited	82%	15%
Ba Town Council	FY 2023/2024	\$1,194,732.69	\$867,860.25	\$2,062,592.94	\$629,043.00	169,039.44	818,082.44	1,244,510.50		72%	16%
	FY 2024/2025	\$1,708,637.47	\$966,727.34	\$2,675,364.81	\$664,064.00	123,734.00	787,798.00	1,787,566.81		77%	7%
	FY 2022/2023	\$38,382.84	\$64,636.57	\$103,031.41	\$55,714.00	6,138.48	61,852.48	41,178.93	Unaudited	86%	16%
Tavua Town Council	FY 2023/2024	\$40,311.42	\$106,505.20	\$146,816.62	\$85,478.00	3,283.68	88,761.68	58,057.94		80%	8%
	FY 2024/2025	\$52,600.62	\$107,429.69	\$160,030.31	\$81,862.64	4,179.26	86,061.90	73,968.41		76%	8%
	FY 2022/2023	\$87,363.42	\$82,342.58	\$170,206.00	\$43,564.00	17,244.00	60,808.00	109,398.00	Audited	53%	20%
Rakiraki Town Council	FY 2023/2024	\$109,398.00	\$87,137.00	\$196,535.00	\$47,911.37	16,127.89	84,039.26	132,456.74		55%	15%
	FY 2024/2025	\$140,399.64	\$87,137.00	\$227,536.64	\$61,088.21	34,778.67	95,866.88	131,669.76		70%	25%
	FY 2022/2023	\$2,494,506.57	\$1,411,440.00	\$3,905,946.57	\$788,573.00	674,576.50	1,463,149.50	2,442,787.07	Unaudited	77%	39%
Labasa Town Council	FY 2023/2024	\$2,442,797.07	\$1,181,095.00	\$3,623,892.07	\$791,091.00	177,621.82	968,112.82	2,555,779.25		70%	28%
	FY 2024/2025	\$2,655,779.25	\$1,466,292.62	\$4,122,071.87	\$1,027,289.00	280,887.80	1,307,956.80	2,814,115.07		75%	20%
	FY 2022/2023	\$747,042.18	\$583,096.04	\$1,330,138.22	\$424,475.69	288,016.63	712,492.32	617,645.90	Unaudited	73%	39%
Sanusavu Town Council	FY 2023/2024	\$550,887.27	\$667,584.47	\$1,218,271.74	\$575,850.96	200,145.15	775,996.11	442,275.83		86%	36%
	FY 2024/2025	\$469,054.28	\$671,979.93	\$1,141,044.21	\$536,540.90	125,169.88	661,710.78	479,333.43		80%	27%
	FY 2022/2023	\$118,068.84	\$157,126.58	\$275,195.42	\$120,131.69	19,218.19	139,349.88	135,845.54	Unaudited	76%	16%
Levuka Town Council	FY 2023/2024	\$135,845.54	\$185,997.88	\$321,843.40	\$140,754.56	20,581.29	161,335.85	190,507.55		76%	16%
	FY 2024/2025	\$160,507.55	\$194,192.38	\$354,699.93	\$141,441.36	21,523.52	162,964.88	191,735.05		73%	13%
TOTAL			\$168,333,176.73		\$78,349,306.18	\$23,586,958.92	\$101,938,267.10	\$209,822,356.74		73%	22%

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has reviewed the rates collection position of the 13 Municipal Councils for the relevant period. The rates assessment information is presented in the Ministry's rates collection assessment data for the financial years 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025.

For purposes of the response, annual rates due/billed represents the annual rates invoiced, total collection represents current rates collected together with arrears collected, and revised closing arrears represents the outstanding rates position at the end of each financial year.

Improvement in Rates Collection by Municipal Councils

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Government continues to place emphasis on strengthening the financial sustainability of Municipal Councils, particularly through improved rates collection and recovery of outstanding arrears. The collection data for the three financial years from 2022-2023 to 2024-2025 indicates that some Municipal Councils have recorded positive improvements in their revenue collection performance. Notable improvements were recorded by Lami, Sigatoka, Nadi, Rakiraki, Labasa, Savusavu and Nasinu Town Councils, with increases in current rates collection and, in several cases, improved recovery of outstanding arrears.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Lami Town Council improved its current collection rate from 81 percent in 2022-2023 to 93 percent in 2024-2025. Sigatoka Town Council maintained a current collection rate of 94 percent in both 2023-2024 and 2024-2025, while its arrears collection rate increased significantly to 128 percent in 2024-2025. Rakiraki Town Council also improved its current collection rate from 53 percent to 70 percent over the same period.

Similarly, Nadi Town Council increased its current collection rate from 65 percent in 2023-2024 to 72 percent in 2024-2025, while Labasa Town Council improved from 70 percent to 75 percent. Nasinu Town Council recorded an increase in its current rates collection rate from 54 percent to 57 percent, accompanied by a significant increase in arrears collected.

These results demonstrate that Municipal Councils are making progress in strengthening their revenue collection systems and improving the recovery of outstanding rates. The Government, through the Ministry responsible for Local Government, will continue to work with Councils to strengthen revenue administration, improve compliance, enhance arrears recovery and promote greater financial sustainability. The objective is to ensure that Councils are better positioned to meet their financial obligations and provide sustainable and quality municipal services to residents and ratepayers.

Strategies to Improve Recovery of Rates Arrears

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Municipal Councils continue to strengthen their rates collection and arrears recovery efforts in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972. Part 11 of the said Act outlines several critical steps on the responsibilities and procedures for Municipalities regarding rates collection, including but not limited to:

- (1) S73: Demand Notice to be served on the ratepayer
- (2) S74: Government Contributions
- (3) S75: Liability for Rates
- (4) S76: Payment of Rates by Mortgagee
- (5) S77: Persons Liable to be Resorted to in Succession
- (6) S78: Rates Recoverable by Action
- (7) S79: Non-Compliance with Procedure Not to Prevent Recovery
- (8) S81: Attornment of Leases
- (9) S82: Authority for Lessee to Set Off Rates
- (10) S83: Contracting Out to be Prohibited

(11) S87: Council May Lodge Caveats

The Councils are adopting a combination of administrative, customer-focused and statutory measures to improve the recovery of outstanding rates. These include the regular updating and ageing of rates accounts, preparation of monthly debtors' listings, issuance of reminders and demand notices, telephone and email follow-ups, and house-to-house visits to engage ratepayers and facilitate settlement arrangements.

Councils are further working directly with ratepayers experiencing financial difficulties by providing appropriate payment arrangements and structured settlement options, where applicable. The Ministry has also supported measures to facilitate the settlement of outstanding rates, including Rates Collection Plans for ratepayers facing financial difficulties.

Where voluntary payment arrangements do not result in settlement, Councils progressively utilise the statutory recovery mechanisms provided under the Local Government Act 1972. These include recovery of rates through court proceedings, deduction of rates from monies payable to a person liable for the rates, and other lawful recovery measures available under the Act.

The Act also provides that rates assessed and recorded in the rate book constitute a charge on the land, providing an important legal basis for recovery of outstanding rates. Councils, therefore, continue to strengthen their records and ensure that outstanding accounts are properly monitored and followed up.

Audit Compliance and Strengthening Municipal Financial Accountability

Mr. Speaker, Sir, of the 13 Municipal Councils, Rakiraki Town Council was able to provide audited annual accounts for all three financial years under review. Lami Town Council provided audited annual accounts for the 2022-2023 financial year. For the remaining Municipal Councils, the data provided for the period under review were based on their available financial records, which had not yet been subject to audit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry will strengthen its monitoring of Municipal Councils' financial reporting and audit compliance by:

- ensuring timely preparation and submission of annual accounts.
- providing technical training on financial reporting in collaboration with Office of the Auditor-General.
- strengthening the capacity of Council finance and revenue officers, where necessary.
- improving internal controls and financial record-keeping.
- regularly monitoring and following up on outstanding audit matters.

These measures will support timely audits, improve the reliability of municipal financial information, and strengthen accountability across Municipal Councils.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government recognises that effective rates collection is fundamental to the financial sustainability and service delivery capacity of Municipal Councils. While there have been encouraging improvements in rates collection by several Councils, continued efforts are required to strengthen the recovery of outstanding arrears.

Municipal Councils will continue to engage ratepayers, strengthen their internal revenue collection systems, and utilise the available administrative and legal mechanisms under the Local Government Act 1972 to improve compliance and recover outstanding rates.

The Government, through the Ministry of Local Government, will continue to work closely with Municipal Councils to strengthen their financial management and revenue collection practices, with the overall objective of ensuring that Councils remain financially sustainable and are better positioned to deliver essential municipal services to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government remains committed to supporting Municipal Councils in strengthening their financial position while ensuring that rates collection is undertaken in a fair, consistent and transparent manner.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, above response is submitted. Thank you.

ANNEXURE IV

Reply to Written Question No. 218/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources (Ref. Page 2053)



MINISTER FOR LANDS AND MINERAL RESOURCES
(Hon. F.W.R. Vosarogo)

Reply to Question No. 218/2026 is as follows:

The Valuation Division (the Division) of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources is officially responsible for the acquisitions of iTaukei land leased to the State which goes through six consecutive stages.

The lease acquisition process follows these consecutive stages:

- (a) Initiation
The line ministry identifies the need to establish a station on a specific site and initiates the lease proposal.
- (b) Consultation
Joint meetings are held between the line ministry, the iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB), and Land-Owning Unit Representatives to establish a verbal agreement to lease.
- (c) Application
The Ministry of Lands prepares a formal lease application and submits it to the TLTB to begin their standard processing.
- (d) Evaluation
Upon receiving the formal lease offer from the TLTB, the Department of Lands analyses the terms to determine whether to accept the offer or enter into further negotiations.
- (e) Execution
Once terms are finalised, the lease offer is forwarded to the line ministry to process the required payments.
- (f) Registration
The Director of Lands, on behalf of Government, signs and endorses the final lease document to formalise registration.

The Director of Lands through the iTaukei Land Trust Board currently has 874 active leases. This encompasses all government services in the rural areas, interior of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu, and the maritime islands. Government services such as:

- Medical facilities: nursing stations, health centres, and hospitals.
- Law enforcement: police stations, police posts, and community posts.
- Public administration: agriculture stations and government stations.
- Education Institutions: government schools only. For non-government schools, the Division only negotiates the lease offer. However, Ministry of Education pays the lease.
- Residential developments: Informal settlements, such as the Waidamudamu Informal Settlement.

Furthermore, the Department of Lands have a database that captures all the leases with each relevant lease details. The database is frequently updated to capture new leases and the surrender of

unutilised leases. Additionally, the Geospatial Division of the Ministry is currently working on a platform to capture all relevant lease details with a scanned copy of the registered lease so that it is accessible during field inspections and meetings.

The total budgetary allocation for land rents payable to the iTaukei Land Trust Board on an annual basis is \$4,327,000.

ANNEXURE V

Reply to Written Question No. 219/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services (Ref. Page 2054)



**MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES
(Hon. Dr. Ratu A.R. Lalabalavu)**

Reply to Question No. 219/2026 is as follows:

Mr. Speaker, Sir, based on records available to the Ministry for the period 1st January, 2023 to 31st July, 2026, a total of 1,218 complaints were registered through the National 157 Feedback Line managed by the Ministry of Civil Service. Of these, three complaints were specifically categorised as relating to alleged surgical errors, complications or medical negligence, arising from surgical procedures.

Overall, 157 Feedback Data

Period	Total Complaints Registered	Surgical-Related Complaints
1 st January, 2023 – 31 st July, 2026	1,218	3

(a) Types of surgical procedure

Types of Surgical Procedure	Number of Complaints	Procedure
Circumcision	2	Allegations relating to post-procedure infection, alleged nerve damage, and repeated/unsuccessful procedures.
Breast Surgery/Mastectomy	1	Allegation relating to infection approximately one year after surgery and concerns regarding post-operative follow-up.
Total	3	

(b) Hospital/Health Facility

Hospital/Health Facility	Number of Complaints	Procedure
Lautoka Hospital	2	1 circumcision-related; 1 breast surgery/mastectomy-related
Raiwaqa Health Centre	1	Circumcision-related
Total	3	

(c) Investigation, Resolution Facility and Legal Status

Year	Cases Cascaded to SG's Office	Status
2023	6	Documents submitted to SG's Office; 1 case settled out of court for \$50,000
2024	9	Under active legal review and/or court processing
2025	6	Under active legal review
2026 (January-July)	5	Under active investigation/review
Total	26	

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are also cases received directly by the Solicitor-General's Office through legal processes taken by patients. A total of 26 cases were received by the Solicitor-General's Office out of which, five are surgical related requiring cataract, amputation and laparotomy procedures.

The Colonial War Memorial Hospital and Lautoka Aspen Hospital were the facilities that these surgical procedures were performed.

ANNEXURE VI

Reply to Written Question No. 220/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management (Ref. Page 2054)



**MINISTER FOR RURAL AND MARITIME DEVELOPMENT
AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

(Hon. M.D. BULITAVU)

Reply to Question No. 220/2026 is as follows:

The Rural Outer Island (ROI) Programme aims to improve basic infrastructure and access to essential services for people living in rural and outer island communities. It helps address challenges such as poor connectivity and limited access to markets and services, while supporting livelihoods and creating better opportunities for rural communities.

The Government allocated a total of \$2.93 million under the ROI Programme during the last financial year to improve farm access roads and strengthen rural connectivity throughout Fiji. These roads are important because they make it easier for farmers to transport their produce, for families to reach essential services, and for people in rural areas to access opportunities that can improve their livelihoods. Improved farm access roads can also reduce transportation costs, minimise post-harvest losses, improve productivity, and make better use of agricultural land.

Key works completed under the Ministry's ROI Programme across the four Divisions are tabulated below:

Table 1:

During the last financial year, the Ministry completed three farm access road projects, covering a total of 8.7 kilometres in the Central Division.

Farm Access Road	Length (km)	Division
Wainimakutu-Nasava Access Road Phase 2	3	Central Division
Namoli Access Road Phase 2 - Waidalice	1.7	
Logani Community Farm Access Road	4	

While the total distance may seem modest, these roads are important in improving access through the interior areas of Naitasiri, Namosi and Navosa. They provide access to productive agricultural land, improve movement between communities, and give farmers a more reliable route to transport their produce to market.

Table 2:

In the Northern Division, the Ministry completed approximately 22.5 kilometres of farm access roads, as tabulated below:

Farm Access Road	Length (km)	Division
Niurua Farm Road	6	Northern Division
Makolei Community Farm Road Phase 3	3	
Lomaloma Community Farm Access Road	4.5	
Caurokodrika Community Farm Access Road	5	
Navau Community Farm Access Road	4	

Many farmers in these areas were previously disconnected from the main road network, making the movement of produce and access to essential services more difficult, particularly during adverse weather. These projects have improved access to the main roads, reduced travel difficulties, and made it easier for farmers to transport their produce to market.

Table 3

In the Eastern Division, the Ministry completed two major projects totaling 16.4 kilometres. These are:

Farm Access Road	Length (km)	Division
Naqalotu-Tawava-Daviqele Farm Road	6.8	Eastern Division
Cakova-Vadra Access Road	9.6	

These projects are important in extending access to communities and agricultural areas that have traditionally faced challenges due to their location.

As these linkages are further expanded and connected with the existing road network, they will improve movement for farmers and communities and support greater access to markets and essential services.

Table 4

In the Western Division, the Ministry completed approximately 40.5 kilometres of farm access roads, representing the largest share of roads delivered under the ROI Programme.

Farm Access Road	Length (km)	Division
Lalati Farm Access Road Phase 2	3.5	Western Division
Narata-Vunamoli Phase 2	12	
Nasaucoko Phase 3	9	
Soa-Nalidi Community Farm Access Road	8	
Navilawa-Yaloku Farm Access Road in Nalotawa-Ba	8	

These roads provide important access to the agricultural highlands of Ba, Navosa and Nadi, where communities are engaged in livestock farming, root crop production and other agricultural activities. Better road access allows farmers to move their goods more easily, reach markets and make better use of the land available to them.

Between November 2025 and July 2026, the Rural Outer Island Programme has delivered approximately 88.1 kilometres of farm access roads across the four Divisions.

The impact of these investments goes beyond the kilometres constructed.

- (1) Farmers can transport their produce to markets more efficiently and at lower cost.
- (2) Improved access makes it easier to bring previously difficult- to-reach agricultural land into productive use.
- (3) Better roads improve access to schools, health facilities and other essential government services.

Importantly, these investments support local economic activity and create employment opportunities through construction and related works.

The ROI Programme remains an important investment in improving access and supporting development in rural and outer island communities. The work carried out across the four Divisions is helping farmers, families and communities overcome some of the challenges associated with distance and poor road access.

ANNEXURE VII

Reply to Written Question No. 221/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister of Finance (Ref. Page 2054)



**MINISTER OF FINANCE
(Hon. E.Y. Immanuel)**

Reply to Question No. 221/2026 is as follows:

For the period 1st July, 2026 to 31st August, 2026, the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) conducted 718 compliance checks across Fiji to ensure employers are meeting their obligations under the Fiji National Provident Fund Act. As a result of these checks, 139 employers were identified as having outstanding contribution payments, with total arrears of approximately \$480,000. Debt recovery action has since been initiated to recover these amounts and ensure affected members receive their full entitlement.

To encourage compliance and assist employers to regularize outstanding obligations, the Fund launched a Debt Amnesty Campaign in May 2026, which will run until 31st October, 2026. The campaign provides relief on older debts and encourages employers to come forward and settle outstanding liabilities.

One of the recurring issues identified through compliance activities is a lack of understanding among some employers regarding their obligations under the Fiji National Provident Fund Act and Regulations. This is particularly evident in determining whether a worker meets the definition of an employee and whether the arrangement constitutes a contract of service or a contract for service.

The Fund continues to educate employers on their responsibilities, including:

- registering all employees who meet compulsory membership requirements;
- applying the correct FNPF contribution rates;
- submitting contribution schedules and payments on time; and
- maintaining accurate payroll and employee records.

The Fund also encourages members to regularly monitor their FNPF accounts and contribution records through the available digital platforms and services. Active monitoring helps members identify any discrepancies early and supports the protection of their retirement savings.

Through ongoing compliance audits, employer engagement, and education initiatives, the Fund remains committed to safeguarding members' contributions and strengthening compliance across all sectors.

ANNEXURE VIII

Reply to Written Question No. 222/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport (Ref. Page 2055)



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

Reply to Question No. 222/2026 is as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable Member for the question. Please find tabulated below are the Planned and Unplanned power outages (hours) for the past three years till end of June 2026 for Viti Levu:

Viti Levu Integrated System Planned & Unplanned outages	2026 till June End [Hrs]	2025 YTD [Hrs]	2024 YTD [Hrs]	2023 YTD [Hrs]
Unplanned Outages	10147.52	8742.73	8245.55	7318.5
Planned Outages	10284.73	16189.28	14053.72	14201.67

Note: The total number of hours recorded for both planned and unplanned power outages per annum is based on the total number of planned and unplanned power outages reported per day. Usually, there are multiple planned and unplanned power outages that are reported on daily basis.

Some examples of Planned power outages are listed below:

- Major extension works on power grid require planned power shutdowns for connectivity purposes such as connecting completed Rural Electrification Schemes
- EFL Team carrying out daily power line/hardware maintenance. This is done daily Fiji Wide and usually is advertised in the daily newspapers and also EFL sends text messages to inform customers.
- Install and commission pole mount transformers.
- Carrying out or supervising external contractors to effectively address Vegetation Management activities (trees near power line) around Viti Levu.
- Upgrading done to the power line
- Installing specific hardware on the power lines such as Lightning Surge Arresters.

Examples of Unplanned power outages are listing below:

- Heavy Rain, Lightning and Cyclones
- Overgrown vegetations or trees clashing with power lines
- A third-party damages EFL underground cables while digging
- Vehicle accidents on EFL power poles
- Bushfires damaging EFL power pole/power lines
- Vandalism on EFL overhead power network
- Any emergency shutdown

ANNEXURE IX

Reply to Written Question No. 223/2026 tabled by the honourable Acting Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Ref. Page 2055)



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

Reply to Question No. 223/2026 is as follows:

- (a) During the period 1st January, 2023 to 31st July, 2026, the Legal Aid Commission purchased a total of 22 new motor vehicles. Nine vehicles were purchased during 2023 and 2024, and a further 13 vehicles were purchased in 2025 to meet the Commission's growing operational requirements.

The acquisition of these vehicles formed part of the Commission's fleet replacement and strengthening programme, with emphasis placed on durability, longevity and reliability. Although some vehicles had a higher initial acquisition cost, the Commission considered the longer-term operating cost of the fleet, including the need to reduce recurring expenditure on maintenance and repairs.

The total number of new motor vehicles purchased during this period, with a breakdown by make, model, year of purchase and purchase price for each vehicle are outlined below:

Legal Aid Commission's Motor Vehicle Fleet for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 July 2026			
Total Number of New Motor Vehicles	Motor Vehicle Make/Model	Year of Purchase	Purchase Price
1	Toyota Hi-Ace (MQ741) 2.8L 14 Seater - Manual	01/12/23	\$ 85,900.00
2	Toyota Hilux Double Cab 2.8L (MR699) Auto - High Spec	29/12/23	\$ 122,900.00
3	Toyota Hi-Ace (MT560) 2.8L 14 Seater - Manual	27/02/24	\$ 85,900.00
4	Toyota Hi-Ace (MU613) 2.8L 14 Seater - Manual	19/03/24	\$ 85,900.00
5	Toyota Hilux (MV174) Double Cab 2.4L (Mid Spec)	16/04/24	\$ 95,900.00
6	Toyota Hilux (MV175) Double Cab 2.4L (Mid Spec)	16/04/24	\$ 95,900.00
7	Toyota Hilux (MV176) Double Cab 2.4L (Mid Spec)	16/04/24	\$ 95,900.00
8	Toyota Hilux (MW175) Double Cab 2.4L (Mid Spec)	22/05/24	\$ 95,900.00
9	Toyota Hilux (MX147) Double Cab 2.4L (Mid Spec)	18/06/24	\$ 95,900.00
10	Kia Sorento 2025 (ON432) AWD 7 Seater	22/08/25	\$ 99,000.00
11	Kia Sorento 2025 (ON433) AWD 7 Seater	22/08/25	\$ 99,000.00
12	Kia Sorento 2025 (ON434) AWD 7 Seater	22/08/25	\$ 99,000.00
13	Toyota Hilux [OO356] Manual Double Cab 2.4L (STD Spec-White)	01/09/25	\$ 88,288.00
14	Toyota Hilux [OO357] Manual Double Cab 2.4L (STD Spec-White)	01/09/25	\$ 88,288.00
15	Toyota Hilux [OO366] Manual Double Cab 2.4L (STD Spec-White)	01/09/25	\$ 88,288.00
16	Toyota Hilux [OO359] Manual Double Cab 2.4L (STD Spec-White)	01/09/25	\$ 91,900.00
17	Toyota Hilux [OO368] Manual Double Cab 2.4L (STD Spec-Black)	01/09/25	\$ 91,900.00
18	Toyota Hilux [OR590] Manual Double Cab 2.4L (MID Spec-Attitude Black)	24/11/25	\$ 97,337.00
19	Toyota Hilux [OO281] Automatic Double Cab 2.8L (MID Spec-Grey)	01/09/25	\$ 117,195.65
20	Toyota Hiace 2.8L [OO092] Manual (White)	02/09/25	\$ 91,565.22
21	Toyota Hiace [OP591] 2.8L - Automatic (Silver)	09/10/25	\$ 95,282.61
22	Kia Sorento 2025 [OO554] 2WD 5 Seater	27/10/25	\$ 91,000.00

- (b) The total number of motor vehicles written off during this period, with a breakdown by make and model, year of write-off, and the reason for each vehicle being written off, is outlined below:

Legal Aid Commission's Written Off Motor Vehicle Fleet for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 July 2026			
Total Number of Written Off Motor Vehicle	Motor Vehicle Make/Model	Year of Written Off	Reason of Written Off
1	FORD RANGER 2022 4X4 TWIN CAB (MB 384) - ABSOLUTE BLACK/BLACK	26/01/2024	Vehicle was involved in an accident.

- (c) The total number of motor vehicles disposed of through tender during this period, with a breakdown by make and model, year of disposal and final selling price for each vehicle is outlined below:

Legal Aid Commission's Fleet Disposed off Through Tender for the period 1st January 2023 to 31 July 2026					
Total Number of Motor Vehicle Disposed	Vehicle #	Vehicle Make	Year Model	Year of Disposal	Final Selling Price
1	HF899	Kia Sportage		2023	\$ 4,320.00
2	FQ 074	Mitsubishi Lancer		2023	\$ 686.15
3	FL 768	MAZDA	2008	2024	\$ 500.00
4	HO 177	FORD RANGER	2014	2024	\$ 12,200.00
5	HO 178	FORD RANGER	2014	2024	\$ 14,200.00
6	HN 958	NISSAN NAVARA D40	2014	2024	\$ 14,000.00
7	HN959	NISSAN NAVARA D40	2014	2024	\$ 12,000.00
8	HN 960	NISSAN NAVARA D40	2014	2024	\$ 13,500.00
9	HN 961	HYUNDAI SENTAPE	2014	2024	\$ 15,000.00
10	IY 490	TOYOTA HILUX	2017	2024	\$ 38,000.00
11	IY 486	TOYOTA HILUX	2017	2025	\$ 48,000.25
12	IY 487	TOYOTA HILUX	2017	2025	\$ 47,600.25
13	IY 489	TOYOTA HILUX	2017	2025	\$ 40,000.00
14	IY 801	TOYOTA HILUX	2017	2025	\$ 42,550.00
15	IY 802	TOYOTA HILUX	2017	2025	\$ 42,200.00
16	IZ 501	TOYOTA HILUX	2017	2025	\$ 42,000.00
17	IY 413	KIA SORENTO	2016	2025	\$ 30,120.00
18	IY 414	KIA SORENTO	2016	2025	\$ 25,500.00

Operational Context and Rationale

Over the period 2023 to 2026, the Commission progressively replaced and strengthened its motor vehicle fleet to meet increasing operational demands. The purchase of 22 vehicles must therefore be considered in the context of the Commission's nationwide service-delivery responsibilities and the need to maintain a dependable fleet for day-to-day operations.

A significant operational requirement is the First Hour Procedure, under which the Commission provides legal assistance within the first hour of a person being detained at a police station or police post. This requires officers to travel to police facilities across the country, in addition to undertaking awareness and outreach activities in rural and maritime areas. These responsibilities are carried out while the Commission sustains its normal office operations. Reliable vehicles are therefore essential to support the Commission's service delivery and operational commitments.

The Commission's approach to vehicle acquisition was not based on the initial purchase price alone. Consideration was also given to durability, longevity and the anticipated cost of maintaining the vehicles over time. Purchasing newer and more durable vehicles was intended to reduce the frequency and cost of maintenance and repairs and, in turn, reduce annual expenditure associated with an older fleet. During the same period, one Ford Ranger Twin Cab was written off following a motor vehicle accident, while 18 older vehicles were disposed of through tender as reflected in the table above.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the 22 vehicles purchased between 2023 and 2025 were acquired to maintain a reliable and durable fleet for the Commission's growing operational requirements. While some vehicles involved a higher initial acquisition cost, the objective was to reduce recurring maintenance and repair expenditure through greater durability and longevity. The purchases formed part of the broader replacement of older vehicles and support continuity of the First Hour Procedure, rural and maritime outreach, and the Commission's normal nationwide operations.

ANNEXURE X

Reply to Written Question No. 224/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister of Finance (Ref. Page 2055)



MINISTER OF FINANCE
(Hon. E.Y. Immanuel)

Reply to Question No. 224/2026 is as follows:

Inward Remittances

Inward remittances totalled \$1,253.3 million in 2023; \$1,328.3 million in 2024; and \$1,323.2 million in 2025. The annual amounts are set out in Table 1.

Table 1: Inward Remittances to Fiji

Year	Total inflows (FJ\$ million)
2023	1,253.3
2024	1,328.3
2025	1,323.2

Current remittance levels are substantially higher compared to 2005 (\$310 million), 2010 (\$295 million), 2015 (\$494 million) and 2020 (\$735 million).

Australia was the largest recorded source of remittances in each year from 2023 to 2025. The shares from Australia, New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and other countries are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Remittances by Source Country (percent)

Source country	2023	2024	2025	2026 Jan–Jul
Australia	47.0	49.0	43.8	45.3
New Zealand	18.0	18.0	14.7	15.3
United States	19.0	18.0	22.0	20.1
United Kingdom	8.0	8.0	7.4	7.1
Canada	2.0	2.0	1.6	1.3
Other countries	6.0	5.0	10.5	10.9

As remittance flows have grown over time, the channels through which funds are transferred

to Fiji have also evolved in response to changing technology and consumer preferences. Remittances were received through commercial banks, money transfer operators (foreign exchange dealers) and mobile network operators. Table 3 sets out each channel's share of total inward remittances. Mobile network operators accounted for the largest share in 2025, at 56.1 percent.

Table 3: Inward Remittances by Transfer Channel (percent)

Transfer channel	2023	2024	2025	2026 Jan– Aug
Commercial banks	20.1	17.3	11.1	36.5
Money transfer operators	41.9	35.2	32.8	16.6
Mobile network operators	38.0	47.5	56.1	46.9

Latest Figures for 2026

Cumulative from January to August 2026, total remittances stood at \$1,215.1 million. The most recent source-country breakdown covers January to July 2026: Australia accounted for 45.3 percent, followed by the United States at 20.1 percent and New Zealand at 15.3 percent.

Additional Information on Remittances

The growing importance of remittances has been evident over the past decade. In 2015, inflows totalled \$494.2 million, equivalent to 5.1 percent of GDP. By 2025, they reached \$1,323.2 million, equivalent to 9.3 percent of GDP. Both the value of remittances and their contribution to the economy have increased substantially, reflecting the contribution of Fiji's diaspora and labour mobility programmes.

Fiji's 2025 remittance inflows were equivalent to 9.3 percent of GDP. This remains lower than in several highly remittance-dependent economies, including Tonga, Tajikistan and Samoa. The available international comparison is presented below. Blank cells indicate that no 2025 figure was provided in the source material.

Table 4: Remittances as a Share of GDP (percent)

Rank	Economy	2023	2024	2025
1	Tajikistan	37.8	47.2	57.7
2	Tonga	42.6	39.2	
3	Nicaragua	26.2	26.6	
4	Nepal	26.2	26.0	
5	Honduras	26.1	25.7	30.1
6	El Salvador	24.7	24.3	27.5
7	Samoa	25.4	24.0	22.4
8	Marshall Islands	22.3	23.5	
9	Gambia	21.6	22.0	

10	Liberia	21.6	21.3	
25	Fiji	10.1	9.8	9.3

The outlook for remittances will be influenced by economic conditions and employment opportunities in key source markets, particularly Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Family and community ties also help sustain support from Fijians overseas during periods of economic uncertainty.

Fiji's diaspora contributes more than financial transfers. Overseas Fijians also bring skills, expertise, investment and international networks. Stronger diaspora engagement and labour mobility partnerships can create opportunities for entrepreneurship, skills development and long-term growth.