

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

TUESDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER, 2024

[CORRECTED COPY]

CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Minutes	2210
Communication from the Speaker	2210
Election of the Speaker of the Republic of Fiji	2210-2215
Adjournment	2216

TUESDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER, 2024

The Parliament met at 8.03 a.m. pursuant to notice.

DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

Hon. Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs

Hon. Graham Everett Leung, Attorney-General

Hon. Manoa Seru Nakausabaria Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives and Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications

Hon. Ro Filipe Qaraniqio Tuisawau, Minister for Public Works and Meteorological Services and Transport

Hon. Dr. Ratu Atonio Rabici Lalabalavu, Minister for Health and Medical Services

Hon. Charan Jeath Singh, Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry

Hon. Filimoni Wainiqolo Rasokisoki Vosarogo, Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources

Hon. Siromi Dokonivalu Turaga, Minister for Justice

Hon. Pio Tikoduadua, Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration

Hon. Aseri Masivou Radrodro, Minister for Education

Hon. Sakiasi Raisevu Ditoka, Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management

Hon. Ifereimi Vasu, Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Culture, Heritage and Arts

Hon. Jese Saukuru, Minister for Youth and Sports

Hon. Maciu Katamotu Nalumisa, Minister for Housing and Local Government

Hon. Agni Deo Singh, Minister for Employment, Productivity and Workplace Relations

Hon. Vatimi Tidara Tuinasakea Kaunitawake Rayalu, Minister for Agriculture and Waterways

Hon. Alitia Vakatai Bavou Cirikiyasawa Bainivalu, Minister for Fisheries and Forestry

Hon. Lenora Salusalu Qereqeretabua, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs

Hon. Esrom Yosef Immanuel, Assistant Minister for Finance

Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna, Assistant Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister

Hon. Isikeli Tuiwailevu, Assistant Minister for iTaukei Affairs

Hon. Iliesa Sovui Vanawalu, Assistant Minister for Education

Hon. Ratu Rakuita Solesole Sauramaeva Vakalalabure, Assistant Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration

Hon. Sashi Kiran, Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation

Hon. Jovesa Rokuta Vocea, Assistant Minister for Rural, Maritime Development and Disaster Management

Hon. Tomasi Niuvotu Tunabuna, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Waterways

Hon. Kalaveti Vodo Ravu

Hon. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu

Hon. Jone Usamate

Hon. Faiyaz Siddiq Koya

Hon. Premila Devi Kumar

Hon. Viliame Naupoto

Hon. Ioane Naivalurua

Hon. Mosese Drecala Bulitavu

Hon. Parveen Kumar Bala

Hon. Penioni Koliniwai Ravunawa

Hon. Sachida Nand
Hon. Semi Tuleca Koroilavesau
Hon. Aliko Bia
Hon. Vijay Nath
Hon. Ratu Josaia Bulavakarua Niudamu
Hon. Hem Chand
Hon. Ketan Kirit Lal
Hon. Naisa Tatau Tuinaceva
Hon. Viam Pillay
Hon. Alipate Nagata Tuicolo
Hon. Virendra Lal
Hon. Rinesh Ritesh Sharma
Hon. Taito Rokomatu Matasawalevu
Hon. Joseph Nitya Nand

Absent

Hon. Prof. Biman Chand Prasad, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics
Hon. Viliame Rogoibulu Gavoka, Deputy Prime Minister and, Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation
Hon. Lynda Diseru Tabuya, Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection
Hon. Sanjay Salend Kirpal
Hon. Shalen Kumar

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 31st October, 2024, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SPEAKER

I welcome all honourable Members to today's Special Sitting and to those who are watching proceedings on television and on the internet, thank you for taking interest in the workings of your Parliament.

ELECTION OF THE SPEAKER OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

DEPUTY SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, in accordance with Standing Order 17(3), I will now resume my seat in the Chamber to allow the Secretary-General to preside over Parliament for the election of the Speaker.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- Honourable Members, I now call for nominations for the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji.

I call upon the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Climate Change, Environment, Civil Service, Information, Public Enterprises and Veteran Affairs for his nomination.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- I move:

That the honourable, Mr. Justice Filimone Jitoko, do take the Chair as Speaker of Parliament.

HON. V. NAUPOTO.- Madam Secretary-General, I second the nomination.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- I now invite the honourable Prime Minister to give a brief account of the nominee's credentials.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Madam Secretary-General, the honourable Deputy Prime Ministers, honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers, honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, members of the public who may be watching us via television and livestream or listening to their radios. *Ni sa bula vinaka* and a very good morning to you all.

Madam Secretary-General, I rise in accordance with Standing Order 17(4) to propose the name of Mr. Justice Filimone Jitoko as the new Speaker to preside over this august House. Mr. Justice Jitoko was born on 3rd October, 1949, in Kabara, Lau, to his parents, Mr. Isireli Rarawa and Mrs. Leba Wainise. He is a proud husband of Mrs. Elina Senirewa Jitoko, and they are doting parents of two sons and two daughters.

From his humble beginnings at a District School in Kabara, and later attending Ratu Kadavulevu School and Queen Victoria School, Mr. Justice Jitoko has become a distinguished Pacific Jurist, a diplomat and an academic. He is an outstanding son of Fiji. A keen sportsman, he was a member of the Fiji Secondary Schools Rugby Team in 1969. Prior to that, he captained the Queen Victorian School First XV Rugby Team, as well as the school cricket, hockey and athletics team.

Mr. Justice Jitoko read law at the Victoria University of Wellington from 1972 to 1976. While there, he was a member of the cricket and rugby team of the University. He was admitted to the New Zealand Bar and the Bar of the High Court of Fiji in 1978.

He has had a storied legal career as a State Law Officer, rising to the position of Solicitor-General and later, stints as Resident Magistrate and Puisne Judge of the High Court of Fiji. Mr. Justice Jitoko also served as the Legal Advisor to the Bose Levu Vakaturaga from 1988 to 1994. The apex of his professional career, most recently, is as President of the Fiji Court of Appeal and prior to that, as Chief Justice of the Republic of Nauru.

As a Diplomat, Madam Secretary-General, he served as Fiji's Ambassador to the Court of St. James in the United Kingdom and also was accredited to the Holy See, Denmark and Israel. He also served as Counsellor at our Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York and at our Embassy to the United States in Washington D.C.

As a senior and trustworthy civil servant, Mr. Justice Jitoko served as Secretary to Cabinet. He also briefly joined Academia as a Senior Lecturer at the School of Islands and Oceans as well as the School of Law in the University of the South Pacific.

On Community Service, Madam Secretary-General, another significant highlight is Mr. Justice Jitoko's fiduciary service to his *vanua* and community in giving back to the nation. Mr. Justice Jitoko has served as Chairman of the Kabara Development Corporation from 1992 to 1996, as well as the Ratu Mara Education Trust Board. He had also served as Governor on the Adi Cakobau School Board of Governors and President of Fiji Cricket Association as well as the Queen Victoria School Old Boy's Club.

In conclusion, Madam Secretary-General, Mr. Justice Jitoko as an eminent Jurist, illustrious Diplomat, senior Civil Servant and Academic, is well regarded and well respected. I have, no doubt, that his sense of fairness and commitment to uphold the parliamentary democracy in this land at all times will make him an excellent holder of this High Office. He will bring outstanding leadership, communication and strategic thinking credentials and gravitas to the Office of the Speaker in guiding parliamentary debate and ensuring that the people of this nation participate in their governance.

The Coalition Government has an ambitious and intricate legislative agenda and his brilliant qualities as a Jurist will ensure that Parliament make laws that are user-friendly, coherent and navigable. As Lord Bingham had said, the law should be, and I quote: "accessible and so far as possible intelligible, clear and predictable."

Mr. Justice Jitoko's distinguished national, regional and international service as an outstanding Jurist, illustrious Diplomat and Academic makes him eminently suitable to take the Chair as Speaker of this august House. Therefore, Madam Secretary-General, I commend his name to the House for election as our Speaker.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- I now call upon the honourable Leader of the Opposition for his nomination.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Secretary-General, I move:

That Mr. Ruveni Nadalo do take the Chair of Parliament as Speaker.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Madam Secretary-General, I as a stand-alone and Independent Member of Parliament, second the name of Mr. Ruveni Nadalo to be the Speaker of Parliament.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- I now invite the honourable Leader of the Opposition to give a brief account of the nominee's credentials.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Madam Secretary-General, I rise in accordance with Standing Order 17(4) as well and as the Leader of the Opposition, I have announced our nomination for Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Ruveni Nadalo, who was a former Deputy Speaker of Parliament as well during the term of Parliament from 2014 to 2018.

Honourable Members, Mr. Ruveni Nadalo is a proud son of Batiri, Malomalo, Nadroga to the late Isikeli Nadalo. A long serving member of the National Federation Party, who inspired Mr. Nadalo's interest in politics at a very tender age and Mr. Nadalo was raised in one of the most politically active families in Fiji then and grew up instilled in the values of public service and commitment to serving the interest of the people of Fiji. His late father left behind a legacy as a champion for multiracial representation and regional interest which profound the influence of Mr. Nadalo in his approach to leadership. He is also a distinguished leader in the *vanua*, particularly in his *tikina* of Malomalo in Nadroga, and has also served as the Chairman of the Nadroga/Navosa Provincial Council from the years 2019 to 2022. He has demonstrated during his term as Deputy Speaker of Parliament the capability to handle parliamentary affairs. He has also during his term as

a parliamentarian served as a Member of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, on the Business Committee, the House Committee, and as Deputy Speaker was also chair of the Privileges Committee.

His experience as Deputy Speaker helped him to acquire a deeper understanding of the procedures of Parliament, the capacity to preside over the passage of legislation and the ability to oversee debates in an impartial and effective manner. His suitability of a Speaker, therefore, is unquestionable. He has also had various international engagements in serving under those capacities and this has put him in good stand to assume the position of Speaker. In nominating Mr. Nadalo, we are very confident that he will not only continue the kind of leadership of Speakers before him, but also raise the level of service that Fiji requires of this critical position. Mr. Nadalo is committed to fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity in Parliament and will lead Parliament with integrity and wisdom.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.- Honourable Members, are there any further nominations?

Thank you. Honourable Members, since there is more than one nomination, and pursuant to Standing Order 17(7), the Parliament is required to undertake a roll call vote. Pursuant to Standing Order 17(8), the Secretary-General will ask each honourable Member separately how the honourable Member wishes to vote. Each honourable Member upon being called will give his or her vote stating the name of the person for whom the honourable Member wishes to vote for. Pursuant to Standing Order 17(10), and after tallying the results, the Secretary-General will announce the results and declares the person receiving the greatest number of votes to be elected. Please kindly take further note that the roll call vote will be undertaken in alphabetical order of surnames.

Government Nominee – Justice Filimone Jitoko

- 1) Bainivalu, Honourable Alitia Vakatai Bavou Cirikiyasawa
- 2) Bia, Honourable Alik
- 3) Bilitavu, Honourable Mosese Drecala
- 4) Ditoka, Honourable Sakiasi Raisevu
- 5) Immanuel, Honourable Esrom Yosef
- 6) Kamikamica, Honourable Manoa Seru Nakausabaria
- 7) Kiran, Honourable Sashi
- 8) Lalabalavu, Honourable Dr. Ratu Atonio Rabici
- 9) Naivalurua, Honourable Ioane
- 10) Nalumisa, Honourable Maciu Katamotu
- 11) Naupoto, Honourable Viliame
- 12) Qereqeretabua, Honourable Lenora Salusalu
- 13) Radrod, Honourable Aseri Masivou
- 14) Ravu, Honourable Kalaveti Vodo
- 15) Ravunawa, Honourable Penioni Koliniwai
- 16) Rayalu, Honourable Vatimi Tidara Tuinasakea Kaunitawake
- 17) Matasawalevu, Honourable Taito Rokomatu
- 18) Saukuru, Honourable Jese
- 19) Singh, Honourable Agni Deo
- 20) Singh, Honourable Charan Jeath
- 21) Tikoduadua, Honourable Pio
- 22) Tubuna, Honourable Sakiusa
- 23) Tuicolo, Honourable Alipate Nagata
- 24) Tuinaceva, Honourable Naisa Tatau
- 25) Tuisawau, Honourable Ro Filipe Qaraniqio

- 26) Tuiwailevu, Honourable Ratu Isikeli
- 27) Tunabuna, Honourable Tomasi Niuvotu
- 28) Turaga, Honourable Siromi Dokonivalu
- 29) Vakalalabure, Honourable Ratu Rakuira Solesole Sauramaeva
- 30) Vanawalu, Honourable Iliesa Sovui
- 31) Vasu, Honourable Ifereimi
- 32) Vocea, Honourable Jovesa Rokuta
- 33) Vosarogo, Honourable Filimoni Wainiqolo Rasokisoki

Opposition Nominee – Mr. Ruveni Nadalo

- 1) Bala, Honourable Parveen Kumar
- 2) Chand, Honourable Hem
- 3) Koroilavesau, Honourable Semi Tuleca
- 4) Koya, Honourable Faiyaz Siddiq
- 5) Kumar, Honourable Premila Devi
- 6) Lal, Honourable Ketan Kirit
- 7) Lal, Honourable Virendra
- 8) Maharaj, Honourable Alvick Avhikrit
- 9) Nand, Honourable Joseph Nitya
- 10) Nand, Honourable Sachida
- 11) Nath, Honourable Vijay
- 12) Pillay, Honourable Viam
- 13) Sharma, Honourable Rinesh Ritesh
- 14) Usamate, Honourable Jone

SECRETARY-GENERAL.-

Votes cast:

Mr. Justice Filimone Jitoko - 34
Mr. Ruveni Nadalo - 15

Pursuant to Section 77 of the Constitution of the Republic of Fiji and Standing Order 17(10), I hereby declare Mr. Justice Filimone Jitoko as Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji.

(Acclamation)

I now call upon the honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament and the honourable Viliame Naupoto to escort honourable Filimone Jitoko to the table to take the Oath of Allegiance and of Office.

[Honourable Filimone Jitoko escorted and sworn in as the Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji and takes his seat in the Chamber.]

(Acclamation)

MR. SPEAKER.- The honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Deputy Prime Ministers, the honourable Attorney-General, honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament, distinguished guests in the public gallery and those tuning in to the television broadcast and livestream.

As your newly elected Speaker, first and foremost, I give thanks to the Almighty God for this great honour bestowed on me, for His blessings and favour.

Second, my sincere appreciation to the honourable Prime Minister for nominating me and having the trust in me to carry the duties and responsibilities that come with this high Office.

Third, I sincerely thank the honourable Members of this Parliament for the confidence you have placed on me to serve in this august assembly as your Speaker.

I am deeply humbled for by trust that you have bestowed on me, and I take all these responsibilities with the hope that I will be able to follow in the footsteps of the illustrious previous occupants of this Chair. I intend to listen to and to work with each one of you to continue the work of my venerable predecessor *Na Turaga Bale na Tui Cakau* in transforming our Parliament to be an effective and efficient instrument in serving our people and our beloved nation.

I recognise and pay tribute to the indigenous Fijians, the *iTaukei*, and the owners of this land, *Tui Suva*, and the *vanua* on which this Parliament of Fiji is situated for their generosity and charity in allowing us to build, reside and to meet on this soil.

Honourable Members, allow me to congratulate you for the progress you have achieved in your service to the people of Fiji in the last two years of the life of this Parliament.

Please, allow me also to take this occasion to recognise the support and the backing provided by my family for me, and like all our families, they have remained pillars of strength and our never-ending sources of support and inspiration to each of us to do good for this nation. For me, I thank my family sincerely for their unwavering support, knowing that I will now be spending just a little bit more time in this Chamber and its precincts.

In my humble view, the seat I am now occupying is one that is entrusted with the highest level of responsibility. It requires a vigilant devotion to the rules and principles of parliamentary democracy, guided by the three basic tenets namely that all members have equal rights and privileges as well as obligations; that the will of the majority prevails and must be carried out; and finally, the rights of the minority must be preserved. This position also in addition requires a progressive outlook to always constantly look for solutions and sustainable pathways to strengthen democracy in Fiji.

I am not and have never been a politician and this environment I now find myself in is, while new, I consider it a challenge, but the basic rules of dispensing justice as was the objective in my previous calling, equally applies here.

Finally, with this appointment, I now would have served in all the three branches of government - the Executive dealing with the enforcement of the law, the Judiciary dealing with the interpretation of the law, and now the Legislature, the supreme law making authority of this land. I could not have asked and wished for a more fulfilling life of almost 50 years of my public service to my beloved country.

May God bless us all. In the famous words of our revered statesman Ratu Sir Lala Vanayaliyali Sukuna: "Floreat Viti". May God bless Fiji. Thank you, honourable Members.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That Parliament adjourns until Monday, 2nd December, 2024 at 9.30 a.m.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I now declare Parliament adjourned until Monday, 2nd December, 2024 at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 8.34 a.m.