



# PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

---

## MINUTES

of Proceedings of Parliament at Suva on Friday, Fourteenth day of March, 2025

1. The House met at 9.30 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.
2. Hon. Speaker took the Chair and read the Prayer.
3. ATTENDANCE
  - (a) All Honourable Members were present except for the Hon. Jese Saukuru.
  - (b) The Hon. Viam Pillay obtained approval from the Hon. Speaker for absence from the sitting of Parliament.
  - (c) The following Honourable Members obtained approval from the Hon. Speaker for intermittent absence(s) during the sitting of Parliament –  
  
Hon. Jone Usamate and Hon. Manoa Kamikamica.
4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Leader of the Government in Parliament the Hon. Ro Filipe Tuisawau moved that the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Thursday, 13 March 2025 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

Motion seconded.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.
5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

The Hon. Speaker welcomed all Honourable Members to the sitting of Parliament, those seated in the gallery and those watching the live proceedings on television and the internet. Hon. Speaker also welcomed the third year students and lecturer

of the Fiji National University, Department of Ethics and Governance; and the students from the International Christian University.

### **Establishment of the Public Accounts Sub-committee to Undertake Review and Scrutiny Work**

The Hon. Speaker informed all the Honourable Members that on 1 October 2024, his predecessor invoked Standing Order 20 for the purposes of establishing a Sub-committee on Public Accounts to further investigate the unresolved issues that were identified by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in the following reports –

- (a) Review of the Housing Authority Special Investigation on the Allotment of Lots and Tender Processes (*Parliamentary Paper No. 141 of 2024*); and
- (b) Review of the Special Investigation Report on Procurement of Goods and Services – 52nd Asian Development Bank Annual Meeting (*Parliamentary Paper No. 142 of 2024*).

In that respect, the Hon. Speaker announced the establishment of the Sub-committee on Public Accounts to further investigate the unresolved issues. The Sub-committee would specifically examine the findings of the two review reports, and report back to the Speaker's office at the June 2025 sitting of Parliament.

The Sub-committee would comprise the following membership –

- (a) Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu as Chairperson;
- (b) Hon. Joseph Nand as Deputy Chairperson;
- (c) Hon. Alipate Tuicolo;
- (d) Hon. Taito Rokomatu;
- (e) Hon. Ketan Lal; and
- (f) Hon. Sanjay Kirpal.

The Sub-committee would be issued its Terms of Reference after adjournment.

### **Status – Hon. Sachida Nand and Hon. Shalen Kumar**

Hon. Speaker informed the Honourable Members that he had received official notification from the Hon. Sachida Nand and Hon. Shalen Kumar on their status – that they had withdrawn their support to the Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Group of 17 Bloc. Hon. Sachida Nand and Hon. Shalen Kumar had pledged support to the group that is being led by the Hon. Ioane Naivalurua.

The Hon. Speaker informed Honourable Members that with respect to the two groups of Independents, the Group of 15 Bloc would continue under the leadership of the Hon. Inia Seruiratu and now the Group of 11 Bloc would continue under the leadership of the Hon. Ioane Naivalurua.

## **Standing Committees Membership – Government**

The Hon. Speaker informed all Honourable Members that he had received confirmation of Committees membership from the Leader of the Government, and these would come into effect on Monday, 17 March 2025 –

### **Standing Committee on Economic Affairs**

- Hon. Aliko Bia to replace Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna;
- Hon. Shalen Kumar to fill the existing vacancy.

### **Standing Committee on Social Affairs**

- Hon. Alipate Tuicolo to fill the existing vacancy.

### **Standing Committee on Natural Resources**

- Hon. Taito Rokomatu to replace Hon. Ratu Isikeli Tuiwailevu.

### **Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights**

- Hon. Lynda Tabuya to replace Hon. Iliesa Vanawalu;
- Hon. Ratu Josaia Niudamu to replace Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua.

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

- Hon. Naisa Tuinaceva to replace Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna.

## 6. **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS**

The following reports were tabled and referred to the relevant Standing Committees –

### (a) **Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence**

- (i) 2022–2023 Annual Report of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji;
- (ii) Consumer Council of Fiji – 2022–2023 Annual Report;
- (iii) Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission – 2019–2020 Annual Report;
- (iv) Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission – 2020–2021 Annual Report;
- (v) Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission – 2021–2022 Annual Report;
- (vi) Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Arts – Annual Report 2022–2023;
- (vii) iTaukei Land Trust Board – Annual Report 2023;
- (viii) Levuka Town Council – Annual Report 2018;
- (ix) Savusavu Town Council – Annual Report 2014; and
- (x) Savusavu Town Council – Annual Report 2015.

Hon. Speaker informed Honourable Members that the Reserve Bank of Fiji Quarterly Review for December 2024 report was for information only and would not be referred to any Standing Committee.

## 7. QUESTIONS

### **Oral Questions**

- 1/2025 Hon. Parveen Bala asked the Minister for Housing and Local Government – Can the Minister inform Parliament whether or not he has given consent to the Nasinu Town Council to lease the iconic Valelevu ground for development.
- 2/2025 Hon. Premila Kumar to ask the Minister for Education – Can the Minister update Parliament on the progress and effectiveness of the Transportation Assistance Scheme for school children from January 2024 to date.
- 3/2025 Hon. Shalen Kumar asked the Minister for Policing – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the Ministry’s plans to address the rise in robberies, house break-ins, and street violence.
- 4/2025 Hon. Faiyaz Koya asked the Minister for Housing and Local Government – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the Ministry’s plans to address the extreme hazard at the Lautoka rubbish dump.
- 5/2025 Hon. Semi Koroilavesau asked the Minister for Agriculture and Waterways – Viseisei village was promised to have their seawall repaired and extended. Can the Minister update Parliament on the work and plans to complete this work as the houses close to the shoreline need urgent protection.

### **Written Questions**

- 6/2025 Hon. Hem Chand asked the Minister for Education – Can the Minister update Parliament on the following in relation to complaints received by the Ministry over the past 3 years –
- (a) the number of complaints received per year per Division; and
  - (b) the number of complaints sorted into broad classifications, such as transport, classroom, teacher availability, student-related issues, and so on.
- 7/2025 Hon. Ketan Lal asked the Minister for Justice – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the number and nature of complaints lodged by the general public and the private sector in 2024.
- 8/2025 Hon. Joseph Nand asked the Minister for Immigration – Can the Minister update Parliament on work permits issued to overseas workers from August 2023 to January 2025, including the following–
- (a) the total number of work permits issued;
  - (b) the breakdown of work permits issued for the public and private sectors; and
  - (c) the average processing time for work permit applications.

- 9/2025 Hon. Jone Usamate asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics – Can the Deputy Prime Minister update Parliament on the engagement of advisors across all ministries from January 2023 to January 2025, including the following –
- (a) the total annual expenditure on hiring advisors;
  - (b) a breakdown of the costs distinguishing Government funding and contributions from donor or development partners; and
  - (c) the number of advisors hired each year, categorised by ministry.
- 10/2025 Hon. Faiyaz Koya asked the Minister for Justice – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the following statistics, from January 2023 to January 2025 –
- (a) the total number of pending cases in the High Court, Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court of Fiji, categorised by year;
  - (b) a breakdown of pending cases by type (civil, criminal, or other categories), categorised by year; and
  - (c) the average time taken to dispose of cases in each court.
- 11/2025 Hon. Inia Seruiratu asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics – Can the Deputy Prime Minister update Parliament on all newly introduced fees and revised charges approved by the Cabinet from 2023 to 2024 that are unrelated to the VAT increase to 15%, including the following –
- (a) a detailed breakdown of all new Government-imposed fees, levies, and service charges introduced during this period, categorised by Government ministry or agency;
  - (b) a comprehensive list of all new fees and charges introduced by each municipal council during this period; and
  - (c) a list of existing fees and charges that have been increased, including the specific amount of increase, presented separately for Government ministries and each municipal council.
- 12/2025 Hon. Viam Pillay to ask the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics – Can the Deputy Prime Minister update Parliament on the detailed breakdown of the redeployment of funds amounting to FJ\$28,087,026 within the 2024-2025 budget, including the following information –
- (a) the project name, responsible Ministry, Head No, Programme, Activity, and SEG number from which the funds were sourced, as outlined in the 2024-2025 Budget Estimates; and
  - (b) whether the funds redeployed are due to cost overruns, and if so, a detailed explanation for the additional costs.

- 13/2025 Hon. Rinesh Sharma asked the Minister for Education – In November 2023, the Higher Education Commission Fiji appointed an external review committee to assess three universities. Can the Minister update Parliament on the committee’s activities and findings to date.
- 14/2025 Hon. Alvick Maharaj asked the Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry – Can the Minister inform Parliament on the following –
- (a) how many official overseas travel engagements has the Chairman of Fiji Sugar Corporation taken since his appointment to date and to which countries; and
  - (b) total expenditure (inclusive of allowances, salary if any, travel allowances, meals and accommodation).

The responses to the Oral and Supplementary Questions were provided by the respective Ministers. The response to Written Questions 6/2025, 7/2025, 8/2025, 13/2025 and 14/2025 were tabled by the respective Ministers. The response to Written Questions 9/2025, 10/2024 and 11/2025 would be submitted in accordance with Standing Order 45(3). Written Question 12/2025 lapsed in accordance with Standing Order 45(6).

#### 8. CONSIDERATION OF BILLS

The Hon. Speaker informed all Honourable Members that there were no Bills for consideration.

#### 9. REFERRAL OF TREATY PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 130

The Attorney-General the Hon. Graham Leung moved that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence review the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).

Motion seconded.

The Hon. Speaker confirmed that he had received copies of the treaty and written analysis as required by Standing Order 130(2). Pursuant to Standing Order 130(3), the treaty was referred without debate, to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. The Committee may table a report to Parliament no later than 30 days.

#### 10. END OF WEEK STATEMENTS

- (a) Hon. Alvick Maharaj delivered his End of Week Statement and the Minister for Health and Medical Services the Hon. Dr Ratu Atonio Lalabalavu subsequently responded.

- (b) Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna delivered his End of Week Statement and the Minister for Agriculture and Waterways the Hon. Vatimi Rayalu subsequently responded.
- (c) Hon. Faiyaz Koya delivered his End of Week Statement and the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service and Public Enterprises and Information the Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka subsequently responded.

## 11. ADJOURNMENT

The Leader of the Government in Parliament the Hon. Ro Filipe Tuisawau moved that Parliament stands adjourned until Monday, 28 April 2025 at 9.30 a.m.

Motion seconded.

Question put.

Motion agreed to unanimously.

Hon. Speaker thanked all Honourable Members for their contributions during the sitting week, and declared Parliament adjourned until Monday, 28 April 2025 at 9.30 a.m.

Parliament adjourned at 12.49 p.m.

**Speaker of Parliament**

**Secretary-General to Parliament**

14<sup>th</sup> March, 2025.