

PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DAILY HANSARD

MONDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER, 2025

[CORRECTED COPY]

CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
Minutes	2059
Communication from the Speaker	2059
Presentation of Papers & Certain Documents	2059-2060
Ministerial Statement	2060-2062
(1) Update on Fiji’s Maritime Pine Development – Hon. A.V.B.C. Bainivalu	
Questions	2062-2097
<u>Oral Questions</u>	
(1) Development and Construction of Evacuation Centres (Q/No. 189/2025)	
(2) UN Convention Against Cybercrime (Q/No. 190/2025)	
(3) Ongoing Issues - E-Ticketing System (Q/No. 191/2025)	
(4) Pacific-ACP and Forum Trade Ministers Meeting (Q/No. 192/2025)	
(5) MSME Assistance for Resource-Based Owners (Q/No. 193/2025)	
(6) Saemaul Undong Initiative (Q/No. 194/2025)	
(7) Nature, People and Climate Investment Plan (Q/No. 196/2025)	
(8) Boost in the Education Curriculum (Q/No. 197/2025)	
(9) Feasibility Study – Yasawa Group of Islands (Q/No. 198/2025)	
(10) Update on Road Repairs – Nasinu-Nausori Corridor (Q/No. 199/2025)	
(11) Home Ownership Initiative – Extension of (Q/No. 200/2025)	
(12) Extension of EFL Gridline – Dreketi to Nasarowaqa (Q/No. 201/2025)	
(13) WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (Q/No. 202/2025)	
(14) Public Infrastructure Projects - \$1.6 Billion (Q/No. 203/2025)	
<u>Written Questions</u>	
(1) Civil Servants on Suspension (Q/No. 204/2025)	
(2) Construction of Farm Roads (Q/No. 205/2025)	
Consolidated Review Report – FRA 2019-2021 Annual Reports	2098-2108
Suspension of Standing Orders	2102
Consolidated Review Report – LTA 2017-2020 Annual Reports	2108-2115

MONDAY, 3RD NOVEMBER, 2025

The Parliament met at 9.31 a.m. pursuant to notice.

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

Hon. Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service, Public Enterprises, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics

Hon. Viliame Rogoibulu Gavoka, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation

Hon. Siromi Dokonivalu Turaga, Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General

Hon. Pio Tikoduadua, Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs

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

Hon. Aseri Masivou Radrodoro, Minister for Education

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

Hon. Esrom Yosef Immanuel, Minister for Finance, Commerce and Business Development.

Hon. Tomasi Niuvotu Tunabuna, Minister for Agriculture and Waterways

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

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

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

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

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

Hon. Sashi Kiran, Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection

Hon. Lynda Diseru Tabuya, Minister for Information

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

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

Hon. Jese Saukuru, Minister for Youth and Sports

Hon. Viliame Naupoto, Minister for Immigration

Hon. Ioane Naivalurua, Minister for Policing and Communications

Hon. Mosese Drecala Bulitavu, Minister for Environment and Climate Change

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

Hon. Lenora Salusalu Qereqeretabua, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs

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 Defence

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

Hon. Aliko Bia, Assistant Minister for Youth and Sports

Hon. Ratu Josaia Bulavakarua Niudamu, Assistant Minister for Justice

Hon. Naisa Tatau Tuinaceva, Assistant Minister for Transport and Infrastructure

Hon. Penioni Koliniwai Ravunawa, Assistant Minister for Health

Hon. Inosi Kuridrani, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Waterways

Hon. Sachida Nand, Assistant Minister for Trade

Hon. Shalen Kumar, Assistant Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs

Hon. Prof. Biman Chand Prasad

Hon. Manoa Seru Nakausabaria Kamikamica
Hon. Kalaveti Vodo Ravu
Hon. Alipate Nagata Tuicolo
Hon. Taito Rokomatu Matasawalevu
Hon. Inia Batikoto Seruiratu
Hon. Jone Usamate
Hon. Premila D. Kumar
Hon. Faiyaz Siddiq Koya
Hon. Semi Tuleca Koroilavesau
Hon. Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj
Hon. Viam Pillay
Hon. Joseph Nitya Nand
Hon. Vijay Nath
Hon. Rinesh Ritesh Sharma
Hon. Virendra Lal
Hon. Ketan Kirit Lal

Absent

Hon. Parveen Kumar Bala
Hon. Sanjay Salend Kirpal
Hon. Hem Chand

MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Friday, 3rd October, 2025, as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SPEAKER

Welcome

I welcome all honourable Members to the first of our two November sittings. To those in the gallery, and to everyone tuning in via television and those on our online platform - welcome! Your continued interest and engagement with the workings of Parliament breath life to our democratic process, and we are delighted to have you following along. Thank you for your presence and support.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

The following Report was tabled by the Minister responsible in accordance with Standing Order 38(1), and referred to the relevant Standing Committee for deliberation, in accordance with Standing Order 38(2):

Standing Committee on Social Affairs

2024 Civil Aviation Authority of Fiji Annual Report (*Parliamentary Paper No. 30 of 2025*)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTUpdate on Fiji's Maritime Pine Development

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers, honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, *ni sa yadra vinaka*. I rise this morning to deliver a Ministerial Statement on the Maritime Pine Project, a visionary initiative that continues to stand as a symbol of partnership, perseverance and people-centred progress.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this project is far more than a forestry programme. It is a living demonstration of what can be achieved when the government, *vanua* and our private sector partners unite with a shared purpose to create sustainable opportunities for our maritime communities that have for far too long been limited by distance and isolation. At the very heart of this initiative lies a powerful and enduring principle, empowerment through collaboration. For decades our maritime regions have endured the challenge of geographical separation, which has often denied them access to the same level of opportunity enjoyed by others.

Today, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that reality is changing. The Maritime Pine Project has brought together a coalition of committed partners - the Fiji Pine Trust, Fiji Pine Group of Companies, iTLTB, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Fiji Roads Authority, Genesis Shipping, Drelaga Logging Investment, Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources. Above all, this initiative stands firmly on the support and blessings of the *vanua* of Muani, Namalata, Waikatakata, Solodamu, Buregado and Yawe. Together, these partners and communities demonstrate that true and lasting development is not something done for our people, but achieved with our people through shared vision, respect and partnership.

Mr. Speaker, this project is directly transforming lives by putting real income into the hands of landowners, the rightful custodians of our forests. To-date, a total of \$1.53 million has been distributed to resource owners in Kadavu and Gau. This includes:

- \$570,000 to Muani in Kadavu;
- \$457,000 to Solodamu in Kadavu
- \$39,000 to Namalata; and
- \$464,000 to Narocake in Gau.

These funds have benefited approximately 1,500 individuals and have been used to build homes, support education, establish small enterprises and improve village infrastructure - all determined by the priorities of the communities themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to acknowledge the strong and continued commitment of the Fijian Government in supporting our maritime forestry sector. Over the past few years, a total of \$16 million has been invested under the Ministry of Forestry's Head 32 Budget to advance Maritime Pine Development across our outer islands. This funding includes allocation of \$1.5 million annually for the Maritime Development Programme and \$2.5 million annually for the Maritime Pine Subsidy Programme. These consistent budgetary provisions reflect the Government's unwavering dedication to ensuring that the benefits of forestry development extend to even the most remote corners of our nation.

One of the greatest challenges our maritime communities have faced has always been logistics - the cost and complexity of moving timber from the islands to mainland. Through the Maritime Pine Subsidy Programme, the Government has bridged that gap. We successfully co-ordinated 26 barge voyages transporting approximately 24,000 tonnes of pine from remote islands to Lautoka. These included:

- 16 voyages carrying 6,400 tonnes from Narocake, Gau;
- 5 voyages carrying 9,500 tonnes from Muani, Kadavu;
- 4 voyages carrying 7,600 tonnes from Solodamu, Kadavu; and
- 1 voyage carrying 650 tonnes from Namalata, Kadavu.

These are not mere statistics, Mr. Speaker. They represent a livelihood in motion, families empowered and communities reconnected to national markets and opportunity.

In Nasegai, Kadavu, construction has begun on a 3.6 kilometre access road with 310 meters already completed, an investment of nearly \$5,000. In Wailevu, Kadavu, 480 meters of access road have been constructed, directly benefitting 150 people by providing easier access for pine processing and housing materials. Mr. Speaker, we have also established critical storage infrastructure, a 2,470 square meter yard in Vunisea and 2,230 square meter yard in Narocake serving over 1,400 people collectively. These facilities now function as economic hubs that enhance efficiency, create employment and strengthen the pine value chain in our maritime islands. Plans are already in motion for the next phase of this project which includes the construction of pine harvesting jetties in Ono, Kadavu and Lakeba, Lau. These developments will further open up new avenues for trade, improve shipping efficiency and enhance disaster response capabilities for our island communities.

Sustainability remains the cornerstone of this entire programme. Our responsibility does not end with harvesting, it is renewed with replanting. To-date, approximately 26,000 pine seedlings have been planted, restoring 22 hectares of harvested land. Under the Muani and Nasegai Pine Schemes, a total of \$8,000 has been distributed to support replanting efforts. It is inspiring to note that local groups including village youths and rugby teams have participated in this effort, demonstrating that forest stewardship has truly become a shared national responsibility.

The story of the Kadavu Rugby Union stands as a proud example of this unity and innovation. With the guidance of forestry officers and the support of the *vanua*, these young men have intertwined forestry, sport and sustainability to fund their journey to the 2026 Skipper Cup Competition. That story reminds us that forestry builds more than trees. It builds discipline, teamwork and national pride. From Kadavu, to Gau, and soon to Lau, the maritime pine project shines as a beacon of what can be achieved when partnership is guided by purpose and driven by compassion. It is a project that not only planted trees, built roads and establishes jetties, but also connects families, empowers communities and restores both livelihood and hope.

Mr. Speaker, this is another testament that when Government, *vanua* and our people work together, no island is too distant, and no Fijian is left behind.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for Fisheries and Forestry for her Ministerial Statement this morning which basically covers the harvest of pine forest in Lau, Gau and Kadavu. The background to this pine plantation in Kadavu, it used to be called the “green gold” established by Fiji Pine at that time, in association with the Pine Trust. Over the last 40 years, pine has grown and matured but that realisation of the green gold has never been able to be achieved. I thank the Government for facilitating in the transportation of these pine products to Viti Levu.

As the honourable Minister has highlighted, the main issue with these pine schemes was the actual transportation of pine logs from the islands to be brought across to Viti Levu for processing. This \$1.53 million that has been allocated has greatly helped, and the dreams and aspirations of the people of Gau, Lau and Kadavu has been realised. Without the assistance for transportation, these pine will stand and burnt through bushfires and basically destroyed by cyclones. However, this initiative is greatly appreciated, it has brought financial assistance to the rural areas where they can carry out their initiatives, where they need financial assistance.

I understand that Kadavu has been greatly helped and the pine schemes around Kadavu will generate a lot of economic activities within the island. I understand that the honourable Minister has highlighted Muani, Nasegai, Nawaisomo and Namalata. These communities have been assisted greatly with the money flowing into these communities.

I understand that further development will be carried out in Ono and Lakeba. Lakeba has been one of the longest standing pine schemes. There have been issues with the ownership of the pine trees, but I understand that with the installation of the *Gone Turaga na Tui Lau*, this has been resolved, and the Ministry of Forestry is engaging with them and continuing with the project so that the realisation of the harvest of their pine forest could be achieved.

I greatly thank the Ministry and I know that I have a conflict of interest in this as I am the Chairman of our pine scheme in Yawe and I have been greatly assisted by the honourable Minister, although we have carried out our own road construction and we are going to build our own wharf, but the provision of two barge loads of 2,000 tonnes will greatly assist our people in the *Tikina o Yawe*.

QUESTIONS

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members before we proceed, please, can you note that all the approved deferred questions from the September-October sitting period will be dealt with today.

Oral Questions

Development and Construction of Evacuation Centres (Question No. 189/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management update Parliament on the Ministry's current plans regarding the development and construction of evacuation centres across the country?

HON. S.R. DITOKA.- Mr Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Cabinet Ministers and Assistant Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition and honourable Members of Parliament; I thank the honourable Member for his question.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, evacuation centres continue to form a critical pillar of Fiji's disaster risk management architecture. These facilities not only serve as safe shelters during extreme weather events but also operate as temporary refuges for families who have lost their homes and livelihoods. In essence, evacuation centres are an essential component of our national resilience system for protecting lives, safeguarding dignity and ensuring social stability during crises.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024, the National Disaster Risk Management Council is mandated to approve any building designated for use as an evacuation centre. In support of this, the Director of the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO) is developing a comprehensive evacuation centre retrofitting and construction guideline. This guideline will introduce clear technical, social, and environmental standards to ensure that all centres are safe, inclusive and climate resilient. It represents a key policy instrument for integrating risk-informed planning into community infrastructure development.

Consistent with the Ministry's strategic focus on resilient infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, Sir, a total of \$1 million was allocated in the 2024/2025 financial year for evacuation centres. With this funding, the Ministry implemented 30 projects nationwide involving retrofitting, completion and new construction of centres as follows:

- 11 in the Central Division;
- 7 in the Northern Division;
- 6 in the Eastern Division; and
- 6 in the Western Division.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, complementing these Government-funded initiatives, the Ministry also worked closely with the United Nations Development Programme's Governance for Resilient Development in the Pacific (Gov4Res) to pilot community-based projects in high-risk areas. These include:

- retrofitting of the Yalobi Village Evacuation Centre in Waya, Yasawa;
- construction of the Vio Evacuation Centre Project in Lautoka; and
- Vaturamulo Multipurpose Evacuation Centre in Vaturova, Cakaudrove, which is nearing completion.

These partnerships illustrate the Ministry's strategic approach to leverage cooperation for localised resilience building. In addition, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry, in partnership with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is implementing the strengthening national and community resilience to disaster and displacement risks project, in which there are four new purpose-built evacuation centres and four retrofittables.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the four new evacuation centres donated by KOICA include:

- Maumi Village in Tailevu;
- Vatukuca in Cakaudrove;
- Rokovuaka in Ra; and
- Nauouo in Ovalau.

The four retrofitted evacuation centres are in:

- Yavusania in Nadi;
- Natadradave in Tailevu;
- Nakama in Labasa; and
- Kabariki in Kadavu.

These newly built evacuation centres have incorporated all the design features and standards required to cater for humanitarian needs and security requirements for vulnerable groups and serve as a model for communities and stakeholders who wish to construct their own in the future.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the 2025-2026 financial year, a further \$1 million has been secured for the continuation of this programme. To-date, 26 projects have been approved for implementation, including both retrofitting and new construction:

- five in the Central Division;
- eight in the Western Division;
- seven in the Northern Division; and
- six in the Eastern Division.

These projects' distribution demonstrates the Ministry's commitment to maintaining balanced regional investment and ensuring that the most vulnerable communities are prioritised. The growing demand for evacuation centres is a clear reflection of Fiji's evolving climate risk profile. Stronger cyclones, prolonged flooding and coastal inundation continue to strengthen the safety of rural and maritime communities.

The Ministry's strategic response is to transition from reactive shelter provision towards a proactive, risk-informed infrastructure programme that integrates inclusive design principles, particularly on catering for women, children and the elderly, and persons with disabilities. This aligns well with the Fijian National Adaptation Plan, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy and the National Disaster Risk Management Act in ensuring that evacuation centre investments contribute to a broader national resilience and sustainable development goals.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, while we continue to expand our network of evacuation centres, the Ministry equally emphasises the importance of strengthening resilient housing systems through the Rural Housing Assistance Programme. By empowering households to adopt cyclone-resilient building designs and community self-help approaches, the Rural Housing Assistance Unit complements our national goal of reducing displacement during disasters.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also wish to acknowledge the steadfast support of our development partners and community stakeholders, whose collaboration enhances the impact and sustainability of Government investments. Through these partnerships, we aim to move from emergency response to long-term resilience in ensuring that every Fijian community has access to safe, climate-resilient and inclusive shelters when disasters strike.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when we compare programme delivery rates over time, the data clearly shows that the Coalition Government, within just three years, has completed 65 Evacuation Centres compared to the FijiFirst Government with 60 Evacuation Centres over 10 years. This demonstrates not only greater output, but also a stronger, faster, more community-focused delivery system that this Government has put into place.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for his comprehensive answer. Since we are in the cyclone season, can I ask the honourable Minister, how many of the evacuation centres as promised through your budget remain under construction or have yet to begin, or what are the reasons for this delay?

HON. S.R. DITOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think I will come back with those details to the honourable Member, because I think it is a new question altogether.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to clarify to the honourable Minister that we constructed 60 over a 10-year period simply because of government's policy decision as well. The decision was to slow down on evacuation centres and community halls and concentrate more on schools and other key projects in the rural areas.

Honourable Minister, I have noted that you have dropped Narikoso and Mataluca from the initial list that was approved for the KOICA and IOM projects, and you have included Vatukuca and Nauouo. I would like to know the reasons behind the non-inclusion of these two projects, and the need still remains, is there any consideration to continue with these two projects as initially identified?

HON. S.R. DITOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the issue with the KOICA Project is, it depends on how the KOICA team accepts the sites that are given to them. In Mataluca, I think there was a bit of a land dispute, which caused KOICA to decide to withdraw from there. I believe this is similar in Narikoso as well, but I can get the details later and advise the honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we heard the honourable Minister in his statement to the media that we have more than a thousand evacuation centres in Fiji. Mostly, we use schools as evacuation centres too. If you have visited these schools recently, because we are now in the cyclone season, have you visited those schools which will be used as evacuation centres? Are they safe for our people?

HON. S.R. DITOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Commissioners of the Divisions do that as part of their responsibilities. They visit the schools that are used as evacuation centres. If those are thought to be safe for occupation by our people who go there for refuge, then that is what we do. If it is unsafe, then we find other schools as well. We do try to assist where we can, and if there is a need to help some of those schools in upgrading some of their facilities, that is some of the things that we try to help with.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable Minister for his reply, and I am glad to see that he is well and back in Parliament carrying out his duties. I remember the issues that we had at Lekutu Secondary School, where the building looked really good, but the walls collapsed.

The schools that are being built now are built up to standard, but what are we doing about those that were built earlier, committee-built schools, like what happened in Lekutu? The walls look good, but I think the cement was not packed in, and it fell over. Is there some sort of programme to address those ones that were built some time ago, where people run to, they use it as an evacuation centre, but the structural integrity of the building might be at risk. I mean, the Commissioner Western is not an engineer, maybe the Ministry of Infrastructure. What sort of programme is there to try to make sure that these old school buildings can withstand the kind of forces that we have?

HON. S.R. DITOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I believe the proper honourable Minister to ask about the schools is sitting right beside me. What the Commissioner has available to him, the advice he has, has a wide range of Government officials who are ready to provide him advice, especially the Divisional Engineers of the divisions. They are the people who we look to for engineering advice as far as those concerns that you raise, honourable Usamate.

United Nations Convention Against Cybercrime
(Question No. 190/2025)

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

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service and Public Enterprises, Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications update Parliament on the work undertaken by the Ministry in alignment with the United Nations Convention Against Cybercrime?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Niudamu for his question. The Ministry of Trade, Co-operative, MSME and Communications has been actively leading Fiji's participation in international efforts to bolster our cybersecurity posture, including coordinating capacity building and cooperation efforts in combating cybercrime.

The landmark United Nations Convention Against Cybercrime is the first of its kind at the UN level and provides a global framework to strengthen cooperation among the 193 United Nations members in addressing the growing threat of cybercrime and addressing online child sexual exploitation and abuse while also safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms. In fact, it is the first UN Criminal Justice Treaty in over 20 years.

I am proud that Fiji, through the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, MSME and Communications, with strong support of the Solicitor-General's Office, actively participated in the more than three-year negotiation process of this landmark treaty, which was ultimately adopted by consensus and without the need for a vote on Christmas Eve last year. There was a signing ceremony for the Convention on 25th and 26th October and 72 parties signed the Convention. Fiji intends to sign the UN Convention against Cybercrime, and Fiji has endorsed the signing of that convention, which builds upon the solid foundation laid through our accession to the Council of Europe *Budapest Convention*.

It further underscores our recognition that cybercrime is a transnational challenge that demands a coordinated and united global response. Once we have signed that convention, our next step will be to undertake the necessary legislative reforms to align our national laws with its provisions as well as with the second additional protocol of the *Budapest Convention*, which we signed in June of 2025. We are partnering with the Council of Europe for that, and we will then look at ratification processes, which will be tabled before this august House.

The encouraging news is that the UN Convention against Cybercrime is well aligned with and built upon the Budapest Convention, the very framework that guided the development of our Cybercrime Act. In conclusion, we are determined to ensure Fiji plays its part as a responsible member of the international community, ensuring that our citizens and businesses are better protected from the harms of cybercrime while contributing to a safer and more secure digital environment globally. In summary, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji remains firmly committed to the signing of the UN Convention against Cybercrime as part of its broader cybersecurity and cyber resilience agenda.

Although Fiji did not attend the recent signing ceremony in Vietnam due to the transition of the Communications portfolio to the Prime Minister, the Ministry has completed all required efforts, including Cabinet approval, in order to sign the Convention. The Government intends to sign the Convention at the earliest available opportunity. Aligning with Fiji's international partners to combat cyber threats, improve digital forensics and strengthen cooperation during the investigation of cyber incidents.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime, Article 34 speaks on protecting and supporting the victims of cybercrime. In the last couple of sentences by the honourable Prime Minister, he mentioned what the work will be on. My supplementary question is; can you assure the House that the victims of cybercrime are also

taken into consideration when the policies are made so that they are well protected?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the spirit of our co-operation and in the spirit of our entering into the Convention and its agreements, we will make sure that those are written into our laws and that we comply with the requirements of the Convention.

Ongoing Issues - E-Ticketing System
(Question No. 191/2025)

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

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service and Public Enterprises, Trade, Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications update Parliament on the ongoing issues with the e-ticketing system and what measures are being taken to address them?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I overlooked to acknowledge the work that was done by the former Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in response to the previous question - all the work that had been done for that and also this one, that honourable Premila Kumar has asked.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for her question. Before I address the issue, let me provide some context on the governance mechanism that is put in place to oversee this important national initiative.

The rollout of the upgraded E-Ticketing system marks a major step in modernising our public transportation sector. Mr. Speaker, Sir, when we took office, we inherited an ageing e-ticketing system which was no longer supported by the equipment manufacturers as of September 2023. We worked closely with Vodafone to ensure that despite this lack of support, the system would still continue to serve the public, while preparations were made for an upgraded solution.

Following a comprehensive tender process, which included key stakeholders, including bus operators, Vodafone was selected as the most suited provider to implement the next iteration of ticketing in Fiji. I know there has been a lot of speculation, but the task at hand is not easy as it seems.

Since the beginning of this year, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Vodafone has been rolling out the new system. To facilitate the rollout, the Minister responsible for ICT established an E-Ticketing Committee, which includes representatives from bus operators, the Land Transport Authority (LTA), Fijian Competition and Consumer Commission (FCCC), the Consumer Council of Fiji and the Ministry of Transport. That Committee has allowed us to closely monitor the rollout, respond promptly to issues, and minimise disruption to the public. The change, particularly in technology, is never easy. But this Committee works to ensure that we act quickly and effectively, and I will continue to oversee the work of the Committee and will ensure that the concerns of our people are answered.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, buses remain the primary mode of public transport in Fiji. A phased rollout was adopted to minimise disruption for our people. During that period, both the old and the new bus terminals operated together, enabling existing cards to function on either system. That step was critical to achieving a complete transition to the new system.

As deployment progressed, there were key concerns that needed attention, not only from Vodafone, but from Government and other stakeholders. There have been concerns about long

queues during card upgrades. Vodafone began the card upgrade exercise in March of this year. Initially, the uptake was slow, so in consultation with the Committee, Vodafone announced the phase-out of old cards by 30th June. This announcement created urgency, resulting in long queues at Vodafone outlets.

The Consumer Council of Fiji highlighted two main issues;

- (1) long waiting times; and
- (2) incorrect information at outlets, resulting in restriction on credit transfer and charges for card replacements.

Vodafone was promptly instructed to increase the number of card replacement booths and to use community halls to manage the demand. Information on requirements was also widely disseminated.

The cut-off period was extended several times, and the complete phase-out of old cards was achieved in mid-September. To date, over 486,000 new cards have been issued, with more than 22.5 million registered taps.

Another key challenge has been the limited availability of top-up agents outside urban centres. Vodafone has over 1,000 top-up agents, but not all opt to support e-ticketing cards due to the low transactional value.

To address that, Vodafone has increased agent margins for e-ticketing top-up by up to 50 percent. The Committee continues to work with operators - the LTA, Consumer Council of Fiji and Vodafone, to identify areas in need of top-up services and improve service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the e-Transport Mobile App has also been rolled out. This App allows users to check balances and top-up cards using the Near Field Communications (NFC), and also to view travel history and manage multiple cards. Currently, the App supports top-ups through M-PAiSA, and MyCash integration is in progress awaiting commercial decisions with Digicel. Already about 10 percent of top-ups are now conducted via the App, which has 120,000 active users, a number that is expected to continue growing.

When the upgraded system was first launched, you could not transfer money from one e-ticket card to another. The original plan was to have a simpler system, where cards do not need to be registered, similar to those used in other countries. We quickly learned that that was a problem.

To address that, the Steering Committee has instructed Vodafone to enable transfers for legitimate card replacements, provided that proper documentation is submitted. This measure ensures that passengers do not lose their stored value in cases such as card loss or theft. In such cases, a police report will reinforce the system's integrity by requiring verification before any transfer is approved, which also safeguards commuters' funds and maintaining public confidence in the e-ticketing system.

We know many people were affected by a service disruption in May that temporarily stopped e-transport top-ups. We understand that this was frustrating for hundreds of Fijians who were unable to add credit to their cards. This was caused by a network connectivity issue, affecting top-up machines in stores. However, the main e-transport system itself was still working.

Vodafone resolved the problem that same evening and all services were brought back online. These issues are not acceptable, so Vodafone has been directed to ensure that it is not repeated.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, moving forward, the upgrade represents a big step in modernising public transport payments, and we acknowledge that there have been challenges and we will continue to improve.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Prime Minister for his detailed response and I also appreciate the work that the former Minister for Trade did in this area. We all understand the importance of e-ticketing - it should not be taken off. In other words, more improvement needs to be done, and we can see the improvements have been done.

My question is related to the disposable cards which were initially introduced for a particular purpose. If it is a one-off emergency, you can buy a disposable card. If you are a tourist in the country, you can buy a disposable card. You can use that card - it is one-off. However, that provision has been taken away. I would like to ask the honourable Prime Minister, why was the disposable card discontinued because it provided a good service? We do not understand why it was taken away.

I would also like to highlight that the Consumer Council conducted a survey recently where it found that 48 percent of the commuters are not satisfied with the e-ticketing system, despite a lot of improvement that has gone in. I will not be talking about the survey but just the disposable card.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I had mentioned in the opening part of my response, the system itself stopped using or accepting disposable cards. The new system that came in had to be used with the new cards that came out, and there was no way in which disposable cards would continue into the new generation of the machines.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Prime Minister for the update to Parliament. Indeed, there has been issues. We agree with the redeemed card and top-up access points, technical issues, transparency and inconvenience to the customers. Honourable Prime Minister, these issues have been continuing, and updates have been happening, but it comes at an expense to the dignity of our bus drivers.

We have cases of bus drivers getting assaulted or abused because of how passengers would want to enter the bus, how they want to pay, and I think that cannot be compensated. My question is, while the e-ticketing system is playing a catch-up game of being user-friendly and convenient to the consumers and bus drivers, how can we ensure a stronger justice system to protect our PSV drivers, especially our bus drivers, because of the e-ticketing system failures?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Member would remember that the Party I lead came in with a view of throwing out this system, working on the complaints from the public who supported the Party at that time.

When we came in, we found that the system was a good one that was acceptable to the bus operators. When the disposable cards use ran out, there was a big temptation to go back to cash and there was very strong opposition from the bus operators. We had to keep the bus operations going. There had been a lot of competition, as far as they are concerned, but they have been providing good public service for the public of Fiji for a long time.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, now, we have the minibuses and taxis, and the other unregulated taxis or whatever they call them now.

HON. MEMBER.- “Pari” or pirate taxis.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Yes, those ones. So, we have to be very fair and objective in resolving

this problem. So, we are going along with technological developments and improvements, and we are asking for everyone to cooperate. As they adjust, the public adjusts.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question is still on disposable cards. Any system is man-made. You can create systems, and disposable cards were serving the public very well. In terms of forgetting your card at home, you can just go and buy a disposable card. As I had mentioned earlier on, in any emergency, you can buy a disposable card and use it on the bus.

Since that service has been taken away, it is creating problems for the public.

(Honourable Member interjects)

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- I know, I have heard the explanation, thank you.

However, what I am saying is the importance of that card - it does not mean that you should let go that card just because you have changed the system that is not accepting. Why was the system not created to accept disposable cards?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I respect the honourable Member's supplementary question but as I have said, we are moving along with developments in the IT systems that back up e-ticketing, and Government is working very closely at this time with Vodafone, together with bus operators and LTA, to address the very issues that have been raised by honourable Premila Kumar this morning.

On the transition to the new e-ticketing system and top-up accessibility, a technical audit has been completed and upgraded to the back-end software and terminal devices, and they are all underway. We are looking forward to the time when we can ensure interoperability and reliability of the system. It is a teething problem. We accept that they will be ongoing, but there will come a time when everything should catch up and, hopefully, we will not be getting too many disgruntled customers at the bus stand and bus stops at the time.

MR. SPEAKER.- With the e-ticketing and “pari” taxi issues very fresh in our mind, honourable Members, I now suspend proceedings for a break and Parliament will resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.27 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.24 a.m.

Pacific-ACP and Forum Trade Ministers Meeting
(Question No. 192/2025)

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

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service and Public Enterprises, Trade, Co-operative, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications inform Parliament on the key outcomes of the Pacific-ACP and Forum Trade Ministers Meeting?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, may I, first of all, thank you and the honourable Members for waiting a little longer, having a longer tea break to allow us to go through the State function at the State House.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Tuiwailevu for his question. Before I go into the essence of the question, I would like to just say that Fiji will continue to be a very strong advocate for anything to do with the African Caribbean Pacific, particularly in its trade. We pay tribute to the late Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara and the Members of the Opposition during his time, taking Fiji into the ACP group of countries with the Lome Convention. What we now have are the successor agreements and arrangements with the Lome Convention. Interesting enough, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the successor to that, which is now the *Cotonou Agreement*, should have been the Suva Agreement but we had our exercise here in Fiji in 2000 so that was taken to be the *Cotonou Agreement*.

I rise, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to inform this honourable House the key outcomes of two important meetings that Fiji recently hosted here in Suva, and I thank again the former Minister for Trade in hosting that, the main anchor host. It was held on 17th and 18th July of this year. These meetings brought together Trade Minister officials and key stakeholders from across the Pacific region to strategize on the future of trade and sustainable development in our region.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the context, the Pacific-ACP Trade Ministers Meeting is the main forum where Pacific members of the African Caribbean and Pacific group coordinate trade and development priorities with the European Union. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to chair the joint ministerial meeting of the ACP and the European Union during my former term as Prime Minister.

The Forum Trade Ministers' Meeting is a broader gathering of all Pacific Islands Forum Trade Ministers focused on advancing our wider trade and investment agenda in alignment with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific. These meetings took place at a time of global uncertainty with trade tensions, climate shocks and shifting geopolitical dynamics reshaping the international economy. Yet, that gathering demonstrated Pacific's unity, resolve and leadership.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the Pacific-ACP Trade Ministers Meeting, the Ministers focussed on how trade can be a powerful tool for development across our region. Emphasis was placed on supporting our communities, particularly Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to create sustainable economic opportunities and to contribute to long-term growth.

To advance that agenda, Ministers discussed key initiatives such as the Pacific Trade and Sustainable Development Programme with the European Union which links trade with development outcomes, and the Sustainable Agriculture and Fishery Enterprise (SAFE), Pacific Contribution Agreement which strengthens sustainable agriculture, fisheries and trade-related

capacity across the region.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministers also reviewed the Regional Kava Development Strategy, aimed at improving quality, consistency of supply and sustainable growth of kava for farmers and communities, as well as the Pacific Quality Infrastructure Initiative which builds regional capacity and standards, testing and certification, ensuring that Pacific products remain competitive in international markets.

Another important focus was sustainable industries, with attention on agriculture, fisheries and other key sectors, ensuring that natural resources are managed responsibly while continuing to provide livelihoods and income for Pacific people. Ministers also underscored the importance of standards and quality, reinforcing the need for robust regional systems so that Pacific goods can compete effectively on a global scale.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, during the Forum Trade Ministers Meeting, discussions broadened to include investment, partnerships and regional economic development. Key initiatives highlighted include the Pacific Aid for Trade Strategy 2026-2030, which will guide investment in trade facilitation, digital transformation and sectoral diversification, particularly supporting MSMEs.

Ministers also endorsed the Pacific Regional Private Sector Strategy 2025-2030, recognising the central role of the private sector in job creation, inclusive growth and resilience, and labour mobility was another area of focus, with Ministers agreeing on regional principles to support a safe, fair and inclusive movement of workers, benefiting both communities and businesses.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Ministers noted progress on the Kava Declaration, recognising its cultural and economic significance, and committed to further technical work to ensure it delivers clear, actionable outcomes that provide tangible benefits to Pacific communities. In summary, these meetings reinforced our collective commitment to a resilient, inclusive and sustainable Pacific economy. They highlighted the power of regional co-operation in advancing trade, investment and development while protecting our natural resources and supporting our people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, through initiatives on sustainable industries, trade facilitation, standard private sector growth and labour mobility, Fiji and our Pacific partners are creating real opportunities for economic growth, for community development and for stronger regional integration. These outcomes, Mr. Speaker, Sir, demonstrate that when we work together, we not only respond to global challenges, but also secure a brighter and more sustainable future for all Pacific peoples.

If Members require any further clarification, the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives and MSMEs and Communications, together with Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat stand ready to address and share more information.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Prime Minister for that comprehensive report with respect to the Pacific ACP Trade Ministers Forum meeting. Honourable Prime Minister, I understand a portion of the meeting had an agreement by all the Trade Ministers with respect to some common ground on the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement that was to be explored with the UAE. I understand also that there was to be a feasibility study. Could the honourable Prime Minister please, maybe for the benefit of the House, explain how far that has actually gone in terms of the feasibility study?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- In his handover note, the former Minister for Trade has given me a very clear programme on ongoing discussions, not only with the United States of America, but with other trading partners to further develop and refine our various agreements.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Sir, I also understand within that Trade Ministers' Meeting, there was a country position that was developed for everyone to produce, and this was to do with the European Union and I think some funding was to come to Fiji. I think the date for Fiji or everyone to produce their country position was 1st August. Has that been done because it is of benefit to Fiji and the region?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I know that there is ongoing work on that. I will update the House when I get the finalised report from the Ministers involved.

MSME Assistance for Resource-Based Owners
(Question No. 193/2025)

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service and Public Enterprises, Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Sector and Communications inform Parliament on whether resource-based owners are entitled to assistance provided by MSMEs?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank honourable Koroilavesau for the question. At the outset, I wish to also acknowledge the work that was already done by the former Minister, honourable Kamikamica, for his contribution also to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Sector and national movements of the co-operative businesses during his tenure as Minister responsible for Trade, Co-operatives, MSMEs and Communications - one of the key engines of Government's economic machinery.

From the very beginning, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Coalition Government has been committed to removing barriers that restrict our resource owners' access to finance. For far too long, the potential of our resource owners had remained untapped and undervalued. The voice of our indigenous landowners was silent under previous regimes but today, through this Government's decisive action, including the reinstatement of the Great Council of Chiefs, those voices are being heard once again.

We are building a future where ownership, participation and prosperity are no longer privileges but rights. Within the Ministry of Trade and Co-operatives, MSMEs and Communications, six key grant programmes have been designed to strengthen entrepreneurship and empower resource owners, as follows:

- (1) Integrated Human Resource Development Programme (IHRDP);
- (2) National Export Strategy (NES);
- (3) Trade Enhancement Programme (TEP);
- (4) Northern Development Programme (NDP);
- (5) Young Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES); and
- (6) Co-operative Development Fund (CDF).

Mr. Speaker, Sir, among these, the IHRDP has been the most sought after by resource owners. The programme's one-third, two-thirds funding model has channelled close to \$4 million over the past three years into agriculture mechanisation, value addition, virgin coconut revitalisation and fishing projects, building true autonomy for indigenous enterprises. A shining example is the

Matababani Co-operative Limited in Nakoro Village, Navosa. Despite its remoteness, the co-operative transformed challenges into opportunities, establishing a solar farm that now supplies electricity while generating reliable income. They have also diversified into agriculture and retail with the Ministry providing \$14,000 in support to advance value addition in their kava business.

Another success story is Tokatoka Namara Development Limited in Moala, Sikituru in Nadi, a resource owner company established in 2022 focused on gravel extraction to serve the local construction sector. The company demonstrates how indigenous-owned enterprises can create jobs and strengthen community livelihoods. The Ministry also assisted with an excavator valued at \$78,000 of which \$52,000 was provided as a government grant, reaffirming our belief in the capacity and enterprise of our resource owners.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have also introduced an innovative financing mechanism which has been endorsed by Parliament - the Access to Business Funding Act. I thank Parliament and the honourable Members for their support for that Act. The Act enables registered companies to raise capital through the sale of shares and contrary to common misconceptions, that initiative offers significant benefits to our resource owners, many of whom are now formalising their ventures under the company business model to take advantage of such opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I will be providing further information on this reform in my address later on this week. Formalisation and registration are essential for business growth and our team continuously provides business advisory and compliance support to ensure resource owners are not left behind in a competitive market, whether it be company, sole trader or partnership business structures. Likewise, through our Co-operative Department, we continue to champion the co-operative business model, deeply rooted in our *iTaukei* concept of *solesolevaki*, promoting collective ownership and shared prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, to-date, 837 active co-operatives operate across Fiji, and an estimated asset base of \$132 million, spanning key sectors such as eco-tourism, agri-business and transport. To further strengthen this important business model, the Coalition Government introduced the Co-operative Development Fund (CDF), providing an additional accessible and equitable source of financing for resource-based ventures.

In the 2024-2025 financial year, a total of \$486,316.22 in support was approved for 17 co-operatives under the CDF. Notable recipients include the Nasaqalau Co-operative Limited in Lakeba, Lau - now the island's sole coconut buyer, which has also diversified into lobster supply, seashell export and fuel distribution. Through the fund, Nasaqalau Co-operative received \$20,000 to acquire a solar system, freezer and standby generators, significantly improving productivity and sustainability.

Likewise, the Tabusoro Co-operative Limited in Lomaiviti received \$16,888 for a solar freezer, an outboard engine to enhance its fishing operations and strengthen its income-generating capacity. Our support extends beyond finance. The Ministry delivers free business training in collaboration with key partners, including programmes such as financial literacy, start your business, improve your business, grow your business and cashflow management. These initiatives ensure our entrepreneurs are well equipped with the knowledge and skills to sustain and expand their ventures. We are also enhancing communication and outreach to ensure that every landowner and community member is aware of available support.

Mr. Speaker, this is very close to my heart, we have our own village co-operative that is working very well with the main organisation, and I would like to encourage honourable Members to encourage their village co-operatives to take advantage of all the systems available in Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the assistance and guidance do not end with financing and training, our core function is advisory. As I have said, the expertise in the ministry and the various departments are available to work with our own village and community co-operative associations.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Prime Minister for his detailed explanation. The question that initiated this main question is basically that the resource owners have gone and worked with iTLTB, and it seems to reflect that iTLTB is giving an explanation that the resource owners should form a cooperative before they can access this funding. I understand, honourable Prime Minister, by your explanation now that a limited liability company formed by resource owners can also be entitled to the funding that has been discussed.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, that assumption is correct.

Saemaul Undong Initiative
(Question No. 194/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management update Parliament on the Fiji Deepens Partnership with the Saemaul Undong Initiative?

HON. S.R. DITOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to thank the honourable Member for the question and I take this opportunity to update this august House on the progress of the Saemaul Undong Initiative in Fiji and its strategic importance to our national rural development agenda.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Saemaul Undong Initiative is a hallmark of the Republic of Korea's community-driven development philosophy, which was introduced in Fiji about five years ago. Its financial and technical assistance from the Government of Korea, three pilot villages - Mau in Namosi, Silana and Naimasimasi in Tailevu have been implementing projects that exemplify the spirit of self-help, diligence and cooperation.

Between 2020 and 2024, a total of \$633,804 was provided to support these communities in advancing local economic development, social infrastructure and capacity-building programmes. Alongside these investments, extensive awareness and leadership training were conducted to strengthen village governance structures and empower community committees to plan and manage their own development priorities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, over the years a sum was spent of the three villages:

- 2020 - \$152,000;
- 2021 - \$133,000;
- 2022 - \$109,000;
- 2023 - \$117,000; and
- 2024 - \$119,000.

A total of just about \$633,804.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the new administration of the Republic of Korea, the SMU programme has undergone a comprehensive review, including its global implementation strategy and country-specific allocation. The funding arrangements for Phase 2 of the SMU Programme in Fiji is

being finalised and will be formally communicated with the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in due course. This next phase will focus on deepening impact, improving sustainability mechanisms and enhancing the alignment of SMU with national development priorities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the principles of Saemaul Undong are self-help, self-reliance and cooperation, which resonate deeply with Fiji's own self-help programme administered by the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management. Something like what the honourable Prime Minister has mentioned about the *solesolevaki* concept in the traditional *iTaukei* culture.

In this regard, the Ministry is strategically positioning SMU as an integrated model under the broader rural transformation framework. This integration will be guided by an implementation guideline that will define clear selection criteria for SMU community adoption, governance and accountability mechanisms for transparency and inclusivity, and a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to measure social impact, sustainability and scalability. Furthermore, the Ministry will pursue a new MOU with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Republic of Korea, as well as local stakeholders, to strengthen institutional coordination, reporting and financial accountability for Phase 2 implementation, which has already been approved for Fiji for next year.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is also exploring the scaling of the SMU model from the village to the district level across three pilot provinces. This district-based approach will facilitate peer learning and replication among communities. It will enhance the visibility of SMU practices at the sub-national level and build stronger local governance and leadership capacity for collective community action. The scaling strategy is expected to accelerate rural transformation by integrating SMU principles into broader district planning and resource mobilisation processes.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as part of the ongoing formulation of the national rural development policy, the Ministry will be drawing from global best practices, including the SMU model, to design a policy framework that promotes inclusive, resilient and self-sustaining rural economies. In the medium term, the Ministry envisions the establishment of a Saemaul Undong Academy to serve as a regional training and innovation centre for rural development leadership. The academy will be co-located with a proposed new site for the National Disaster Risk Management Office, allowing shared facilities for research, training and programme delivery. Consultations with the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources are underway to identify suitable land and development options.

The Saemaul Undong model, continues to provide valuable lessons, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to Fiji's journey towards inclusive, community-driven and sustainable rural transformation. Its emphasis on self-reliance and participatory development is perfectly aligned with our Government's vision to empower rural communities to become proactive agents of change. I therefore wish to acknowledge with appreciation the continued partnership of the Republic of Korea and reaffirm the Ministry's commitment to deepening this collaboration for the benefit of our rural and maritime communities.

HON. A.N. TUICOLO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as alluded to by the Minister that Silana Village in Tailevu was one of the three pilot communities in Fiji where the Saemaul Undong programme has been successfully implemented. How can the Ministry of Maritime Development and Disaster Management utilise the service of *turaga naita*, Sanaila Rokotuivuna of Silana Village, who is well-versed with the concept, promote the concept to other rural villages and communities?

HON. S.R. DITOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the *Mata Ni Tikina* of Dawasamu is one of our well-known advocates for the Saemaul Undong movement in Fiji and has been also used in the past. We are going to train communities, I believe, in Vanua Levu and other parts of Fiji. He stands ready to

assist other communities. The Ministry is ready to help support the *Mata Ni Tikina* of Dawasamu if that is the way forward for us.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Honourable Minister, you are intending to move to the *tikina* level. There were other communities too that were part of the initial group that went with *Turaga Ni Yavusa Silana*, that is the community from Rewa, Toga Village and Nabavatu in Macuata. Are there plans to revisit these communities as well, because they have already been given the opportunity to be trained in South Korea?

HON. S.R. DITOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the final decision always falls upon the donor. In this case, they have decided that the next five communities will be based in the Central Division. I believe it is because of the ease of administration and logistics.

Rewa, yes, probably that can be considered, but it depends on what the Saemaul Undong coordinator in Fiji comes up with. As far as Nabavatu and other communities the ministry goes out to carry out awareness training. That can be done by the ministry itself, but as far as the Saemaul Undong Programme, are five communities have been approved within the Central Division. That has been related to me when I last went to the Saemaul Undong Conference in Korea.

MR. SPEAKER.- It was informed this morning that the Member of Parliament who was to ask the question, honourable Hem Chand, was involved in an accident, not life-threatening, thank God. We hope he is alright, and we wish him speedy recovery.

Question No. 195/2025 is now deferred to Friday, 7th November. I am sure the honourable Minister for Education will be quite happy to answer it then.

(Oral Question No. 195/2025 deferred)

Nature, People and Climate Investment Plan
(Question No. 196/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Environment and Climate Change update Parliament on the \$27 million Nature, People and Climate Investment Plan?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Climate Investment Fund (CIF) introduced the Nature, People and Climate Investment Programme in 2022.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the intention of this investment programme is to support the deployment of nature-based solutions through an approach that recognises the interdependencies which exist between land use, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and improving the sources of livelihoods of rural communities and the indigenous peoples. This landscape approach of the Nature, People and Climate (NPC) investment programme is welcome and highly relevant to Fiji's context.

The NPC's investment targets the reduction of emissions, building the resilience of the environment and communities as well as improving livelihoods biodiversity conservation efforts and disaster risk reduction. The NPC programme continues to support sustainable, just and equitable investment in rural development worldwide.

In August 2022, the Government of Fiji, through the Department of Climate Change, submitted an expression of interest led by the World Bank and also the implementing

partner of the NPC programme. In December 2022, from 48 applications globally, Fiji's expression of interest was selected for progression alongside eight other EOIs for further development. Overall, only two EOIs from the SIDs were selected, from Fiji and the Dominican Republic.

Between 2023 and 2025, the World Bank supported the development of Fiji's NPC Investment Programme under the oversight of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and the Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, and in collaboration with the Ministries of Forestry and Fisheries, Agriculture and Waterways, iTaukei Affairs, Rural and Maritime Development.

Fiji's investment plan for the NPC Programme has been designed based on our priorities articulated in the recently launched National Determined Contributions (NDC), National Climate Change Policy of 2018 to 2030, and the National Development Plan 2025 to 2029, and Vision 2050. The central goal is to strengthen national capacity and shared management of ecosystems for climate resilience through three major components.

First, the component focuses on policy and, institutional capacity framework for nature-based solutions. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this component tackles the enabling conditions required for Fiji to scale up and sustain Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) investment.

In practice, this will include:

- (1) The review and update of our national policies and legal framework such as the nature-based solutions policy, the Environment Management Act regulation, integration of NBS into building permit approval system.
- (2) BPAS, to establish a blue carbon readiness framework to enable Fiji's entry into international carbon markets by building baselines for mangroves and seagrasses.
- (3) Developing data systems and decision support tools for spatial mapping of vulnerable ecosystems and flood-prone areas.
- (4) Capacity building programmes for over 800 offices and community practitioners in sustainable land management, coastal governance, and blue economy, value chains, and lastly, creating a national curriculum for NBS and community resilience and trailing through partnership with the Women in Fisheries Network and the University of the South Pacific.

These efforts will remove policy fragmentation, strengthen institutions, and ensure that future projects operate under a coordinated evidence-based framework.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the second component focusses on the integrated mountain to ocean management. This component represents the heart of the investment plan, which translates policy into tangible ecosystem protection on the ground. Key activities under this component include:

- (a) Reforestation and restoration in the Sigatoka and Navua basins to reduce erosion and improve water quality.
- (b) Mangrove rehabilitation and community-led monitoring of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs).
- (c) Restoration of seagrass, meadows, and coral reefs by coastal communities to enhance coastal protection and fisheries productivity.
- (d) Implementation of integrated water management plans, and link upstream forestry and agriculture with downstream marine health, and the piloting of nature-based wastewater treatment systems, such as constructed wetlands in rural communities.

Overall, these components will improve the management of about 400,000 hectares or approximately 22 percent of Fiji's land area while enhancing health of critical river basins, forests, and coral systems.

And the final component, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is strengthening community livelihoods. This component will invest directly in people and communities through:

- support over 10,000 people directly, and 80,000 people indirectly through livelihoods and value chain development.
- scale up sustainable aquaculture and coastal fisheries enterprises through aggregation, improve market access, and enhancing value chain. This includes capacity building and investment in post-harvest facilities and fish aggregating devices.
- support women-led blue businesses, organic agriculture, agroforestry, and circular economy value chain.
- improve livelihoods and strengthen food security by transforming smallholder farming through aggregation, market, and value addition.

Nature-based solutions, including climate-smart agriculture, will be used to support the programme. The focus is to diversify income streams, particularly for women and youth, so communities can adapt to climate shocks while improving living standards.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the \$27 million CIF package which comprises a 50 percent grant and 50 percent concessional loan will leverage an additional USD\$20 million in parallel financing from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) and the multi-donor trust fund through this Global Partnership for Sustainable and Resilient Landscape, commonly known as PROGREEN, and for the marine and coastal areas through their PROBLUE initiative. These complementary programmes reinforce our goal of transforming Fiji's natural resource management into a climate resilient and inclusive system. An additional \$4 million in CIF grant has been endorsed for a dedicated grant mechanism for indigenous peoples and other local communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform this august House that Fiji's IP approval on 50 percent grant and 50 percent concessional loan as opposed to the initial 100 percent concessional loan when it was first presented. This took a long journey over 12 months to 24 months whereby the honourable Lenora Qereqeretabua and the Permanent Secretary for Environment and Climate Change, Dr. Sivendra Michael, pushed for a pricing policy change from donors and CIF Governance Board by presenting a case of the climate vulnerability and results of the IMG article formation that took place earlier this year. It was only because of this negotiation that the pricing policy mix has been changed to account for Fiji's case, and this is a clear demonstration of Fiji's leadership in the region, on behalf of the Pacific Island Countries on climate.

I will end there, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I was probably speaking for too long. However, I will address this again through a Ministerial Statement probably in the upcoming sitting where this question can be adequately addressed.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for briefing us on what has transpired. My question is, have we already set up the system whereby our stakeholders can actually access the funding that you have managed to get for Fiji? For example, a farmer who wants to access the funding, have you already set up the system as to how they can access it?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, part of the funding will be the establishment of a system that will then allow applicants to apply and the communities that will be identified through the assessment of their applications. That system is part of this funding to set up the system that will

establish the secretariat for administration. That will then give an indication on how and the pathway for them to follow.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I know that the honourable Minister was talking about concessional loan, which I could not get very clearly. I request the honourable Minister if he can tell us that from that \$27 million, what percentage is the grant or what percentage is a loan, or mix of both, and what percentage will be used for administration and consultants? When we borrow money from World Bank, a bigger chunk of the money goes in consultancy work and administrative work, so I would like to understand that.

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have already answered that question when I said that the \$27 million CIF package comprises of 50 percent grant, 50 percent concessional loan, and an additional \$4 million will be grant and the \$23 million will be there, and it will be on a 40 year term at one percent interest rate. That is the condition.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Honourable Minister, I am not sure whether you have addressed it but is there a particular portion of that funding specifically set aside for our indigenous businessmen and stakeholders?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Yes, there is a portion of the fund that I have announced, which is for indigenous people as well as other communities – there is a specific allocation.

Boost in the Education Curriculum
(Question No. 197/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Education inform Parliament whether there is a current boost to the curriculum in our primary and secondary schools with respect to education on the ills of drugs and the upscaling awareness on HIV?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.– Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for his question. There is an ongoing and continuing effort in the Ministry of Education to integrate education on the ills of drugs and HIV awareness across various levels of primary and secondary school curriculum. This approach aims to build awareness, foster responsible behaviours and promote health literacy among students. The key points in the curriculum are building resilience and advancing drug prevention through youth, community and sports in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform this House that with the kind compliments of the Australian High Commission, we extend our appreciation for Australia's ongoing support to the Fiji education system, particularly in the area of curriculum development and this valid contribution under the Vuvale Partnership continues to help shape resilient, healthy and empowered young people.

In the last fortnight, we launched the Future Leaders Fiji at Nasinu Secondary School. This is the first in the country to host this youth engagement session under the Pathways to Purpose initiative which was proudly assisted and supported by UNDP. This programme focusses on building resilience, advancing drug prevention through youth, community and sports in Fiji.

From an education perspective, this programme holds particular significance. It seeks to implement targeted prevention and awareness approaches in the red zone communities and red zone schools where the risk factors associated with drugs exposure are highest. The initiative strategy of using the right messenger, such as Fiji rugby players, former coaches, former internationals, Fijian

Drua athletes, other prominent sports personalities, local musicians and well-known influencers ensures that prevention messages are delivered by voices that resonate with our students.

This initiative represents a whole of government approach. The Ministry of Education in close coordination with the Ministry of Policing, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Trade, the Fiji Rugby Union, the Great Council of Chiefs, the Fiji Substance Abuse Advisory Council and the UNDP and other bilateral partners, to ensure the campaign is effectively embedded within the schools nationwide. Through curriculum integration, coordinated school events and student-led initiatives, we aim to foster a generation that is informed, resilient and united in rejecting drug abuse.

In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a citizenship education curriculum which was introduced this year for Year 1 to Year 4 in 125 primary schools, and Year 9 and Year 10 in 50 secondary schools. This is in the pilot stage. In this term as well, an additional 118 secondary schools have been trained for the citizenship education.

Mr. Speaker, the Year 9 citizenship education students explore social issues, such as glue sniffing, drugs and HIV/AIDS under the theme of human rights and responsibilities, encouraging investigations, or ways to address these issues.

For the Year 10 Citizenship Education, it covers civic participation and national identity, highlighting community advocacy on drug issues including education on common substances such as alcohol, tobacco, opioids and synthetic drugs, along with the short-term and long-term effects of drug use, drug abuse and social and economic impacts. In addition, there is also Health and Family Life Education.

The Year 7 Healthy Living introduces students to HIV/AIDS, emphasising on causes and preventative strategies such as abstinence, faithfulness and safe relationship practices.

The Year 12 and 13 Family Life Education, Mr. Speaker, Sir, focusses on human growth and development, explicitly covering sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, Hepatitis B, Syphilis, Gonorrhoea and HPV which are common infections, using resources from textbooks and health agencies.

Then we have the Science and Biology Curriculum. Mr. Speaker, Sir, in Year 12, Chemistry students learn about the chemistry of medicines and drugs, fostering debates on social issues related to alcohol, cigarettes and illegal substance, supported by textbooks.

In Year 11, Biology includes in-depth study of STIs, like HIV/AIDS, focussing on transmission, prevention and treatment, along with examining the effects of smoking, drugs and alcohol on health to promote healthy choices and awareness of vulnerability.

For Year 13 Biology, it discusses the significance of virus, including HIV, within the context of disease and biological effects.

Then we have the Physical education and Social Studies. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Year 9 Physical Education addresses sports, safety, injury prevention and how HIV can affect physical performance.

On the same note the Geography curriculum links to HIV/AIDS through topics such as population health, demographic shifts, urbanisation, migration and development indicators, providing a broader understanding of the disease's impact on society.

Then we have English and other language subjects. Mr. Speaker, Sir, English and other language subjects curriculum across Year 9 to Year 13 progressively develops students' understanding on social issues such as HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, cyberbullying and human rights through reading, writing, research and critical analysis. Subsequently, the inclusion of HIV drug topics is also part of assessment in other language subjects as well, such as *Vosa Vakaviti*, *Hindi*, *Urdu* and *Rotuman*, with initiatives such as comprehension passages, essays, oratories, speeches, debates, storytelling, role plays, interviews, panel discussions and participation in awareness activities on prevention strategies. Skills developed include critical thinking about societal changes, expressing opinions, research writing and advocacy communication.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also wish to inform this august House that the Ministry collaborates with organisations such as Drug Free World Fiji, the Indian High Commission, FBC, SPC and others to conduct awareness campaigns, oratory contests, posters and essay competitions as community outreach. Media engagement also includes radio talk shows and the teacher award programme for teachers, students, parents and the wider community.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the Early Childhood Education (ECE), particularly within the physical development, health and wellbeing curriculum, there is a focus on safety awareness. This component needs to equip young children with the skills and confidence to recognise and report uncomfortable and unsafe situations.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, how do you assess the effectiveness of these awareness programmes?

Secondly, when we talk about upscaling, it requires time, effort and funds, so with the \$33.8 million shortfall, pending teacher salary upgrades, how do you ensure your Ministry has the funds to continue with these awareness programmes?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have always admired how he raises a question, and I hope this is not a question arising out of the AI.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a policy available in-house that allows for monitoring and evaluation of all these programmes that I have highlighted.

Feasibility Study – Yasawa Group of Islands
(Question No. 198/2025)

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

Can the honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation update Parliament on the Feasibility Study planned for the Yasawa Group to facilitate efficient movements around it?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question.

Before I reply, Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me just share with the House that this morning in Denarau, a bus carrying 55 Sheraton workers veered off the road near the Denarau Bridge and fell into a creek. Our thoughts are with them. It will be impacting on the Sheraton operation for today, but knowing them, with their support system, they can cope with the mishap this morning. There are no serious injuries. A lot of them are under observation, and I just wish to thank the public who came in to help this morning. It is a bit mystifying that it is a pretty well-built road, and how a bus would fall into a creek will be interesting once the investigations are complete.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the update of the feasibility study on the Yasawa Group - a significant project aimed at improving connectivity across the area, this study is part of a larger vision to improve connectivity to Fiji and the outer islands, and it carries immense significance for the purpose of the Yasawa Group of Islands. It will play a key role in enhancing access to the Yasawa Islands, benefiting both local communities and Fiji's broader economic development.

Allow me to outline some of the key financial details regarding the project, the current progress, and the next steps. Before I begin with the specifics of the feasibility study, I would like to, first, highlight the funding breakdown of this important initiative.

The Government is fully committed to ensuring the success of this project. With a total of \$100,000 allocated across two key Ministries - the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation has been allocated \$150,000 within its consultancy budget allocation, and the Ministry of Public Works with an allocation of \$350,000 for the feasibility study of Yasawa Airport.

The work on the feasibility study is being spearheaded by the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works. The joint effort ensures that the planning and development of the project are thoroughly addressed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we move forward, initial discussions have taken place between my Ministry and the Ministry of Works, on the project. I would like to acknowledge the valuable support provided by Fiji Airports Limited in this initial phase. Their assistance has been instrumental in the development of the Terms of Reference (TOR), which is now nearing finalisation.

The TOR will provide the framework for the study, outlining scope, objectives and deliverables, and ensuring that relevant technical, environmental and socio-economic factors are thoroughly considered. The TOR will serve as a guide to move the project into its next phases, allowing the team to begin the detailed work required for a comprehensive study.

Mr. Speaker, Fiji Airports has also conducted a site assessment of the proposed location for the new Yasawa Airport. This visit was essential to evaluate the terrain and its alignment to the technical specifications needed for the airport, including land use and zoning. A steering committee will be convened to oversee the progress of the feasibility study.

The Committee's role co-ordinating the various technical assessments that are essential to the project making certain that the results of these assessments align with the long-term goals of the Yasawa Connectivity Initiative. This collaborative and coordinated approach will ensure that the feasibility study progresses effectively and meets the expectations of the TOR. While the focus of the feasibility study is on the technical studies, several critical assessments will be conducted to ensure that we firmly understand the full scope and impact of the project.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the key parts of an airport feasibility study is understanding the demand, in other words, whether there is enough need and traffic to justify the development. This begins with looking at passenger projections where we forecast how many people and how many freight the airport is likely to handle over time. These forecasts are based on current travel patterns, regional development plans and the potential for future growth in tourism and trade.

Mr. Speaker, another important part of the feasibility study focusses on the environment. This involves carefully assessing how the proposed airport might affect the surrounding ecosystems, wildlife and air quality. The study looks at issues such as noise levels, water use and waste management and considers the overall environmental footprints of the development to ensure that

any impact is minimised. It is also essential that the proposed airport fully complies with environmental laws and regulations, both our national standards and those set by international aviation bodies. This ensures that the project not only meets technical and safety requirements, but also aligns with the commitment to sustainable and responsible development.

Furthermore, I wish to highlight a complementary development that supports our efforts to enhance coactive to the Yasawa Group. The private sector operator, South Sea Cruises, has recently commissioned its new vessel, the *Yasawa Flyer III*, entered service in August. This 30-meter fast ferry has a capacity of approximately 320 passengers, which is about 33 percent higher than its predecessor. The vessel offers greater comfort and capacity with improved seating and passenger facilities. It will provide more frequent and reliable daily services from Port Denarau and the Yasawa Islands. This enhances passenger and freight movements and supports the broader connectivity goals outlined in the feasibility study.

Mr. Speaker, through this feasibility study, the Coalition Government is setting up the foundation for the future of civil aviation in the Yasawa Group. Our goal is to create a safe, efficient and sustainable air transport link that complements sea connectivity and supports long-term growth of tourism and trade.

The Yasawa Airport will not only bring the islands closer to the rest of Fiji but also open new pathways for investment, employment and service delivery. The project is about giving the people of Yasawa great access to opportunity and ensuring that no community remains isolated in our national development agenda.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the feasibility study, does that mean that the environmental portion of that was also being undertaken within that feasibility study? Because its become a delicate area and I understand also that a lot of fishing ground has been lost, et cetera, whilst there is a lot of traffic that goes around. We discovered that during COVID that the fish have come back. So, is that going to be undertaken also in the feasibility study?

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, yes, it will, environmental is going to be critical. As you know, Yasawa is idyllic, pristine, so we need to be careful on what we bring into the island. We have actually identified a site as highlighted here. Fiji Airports, together with our Ministry have identified a vicinity area, identified a site, and it will be very well located in terms of, it will be equidistant from where it is, to Nacula, where you are going to see the One&Only Resort, the \$400 million resort in Yasawa-i-rara which has potential to be another Bora Bora. So, the Yasawa will be well served by this, and we are looking at landing the ATR72 there, to bring in the critical mass for the Yasawa Islands but environment is critical, yes.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, this is a convenient point for us to suspend our proceedings for lunch. Parliament will resume at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.30 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.35 p.m.

Update on Road Repairs – Nasinu-Nausori Corridor
(Question No. 199/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport update Parliament on its Government plans to repair roads along the Nasinu-Nausori area, in particular, the Wainibuku Road going up to Delaidogo?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank honourable Usamate for that question. Regarding the roads along the Nasinu-Nausori corridor, with particular attention to the Wainibuku Road leading to Delaidogo, the Wainibuku Road has experienced significant deterioration, primarily due to the impact of ongoing works, including soapstone extraction activities in the Delaidogo area. These operations have caused sections of the road to deteriorate - some have reverted to gravel.

It reminds us of what a politician said, “I will gravel your tarseal road”, resulting in unsafe and unreliable conditions for motorists and pedestrians. Mr. Speaker, Sir, it has indeed deteriorated. We had visited that area and spoken to some of the residents. The road is vital for local communities' daily travel, and I was quite surprised at the increased population in that area from 10 years ago.

The Government has prioritised immediate remedial works. I wish to inform the august House that work has already commenced from last Friday and is currently ongoing. This involves stabilising the road surface, improving drainage and restoring the structural integrity of the route, because it is also a major route, not only for private but also public transport, buses, et cetera. There are quite a number of residents, school children and also employees (workers).

The Ministry has developed a comprehensive programme for road rehabilitation works in Nasinu/Nausori area, aimed at addressing long-standing infrastructure challenges and enhancing connectivity. Some of the works planned on the Tovata Road, this is for rehabilitation works, we aim to complete this by the end of January 2026, again targeting surface quality and traffic flow and Matanikorovatu Road, Nasinu by the end of February 2026. Again, some of the common features, I suppose negative features, are the lack of proper drainage and also interior surface.

We are aiming to address these issues as we move forward. Around the Nausori area, Nasele Crescent, Qacoya Street, Waidamudamu Settlement Road, and the pavement upgrades and pedestrian access, Vishnu Deo Road for resurfacing and structural enhancement by February 2026. You may have seen the notice by Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) on the Rewa Bridge approach at the Vuci Roundabout. This works is scheduled for completion by the end of the month, again aimed at easing congestion and improving traffic.

Of course, there are other areas such as Koronivia Road being currently worked on. There is also work being carried out to improve access into the city through Koronivia-Nadawa and also from Wainibuku Road to Princess Road. These initiatives are part of Government's broader infrastructure development strategy. We seek to deliver resilient and inclusive sustainable transport. The aim is not only to upgrade, but reduce travel time, also enhance road safety. Of course, as you build roads, the need to support socio-economic development. We all know the Waibuka Road is used by a lot of our farmers in terms of the supply of vegetables to the farm road use to the wider Nakasi urban population. We will continue to engage with stakeholders and communities as we move forward in terms of upgrading our roads.

In the FRA budget, we had provided a funding of \$388 million. This was an increase of \$37.2 million from the 2024-2025 financial year which emphasises the Government's seriousness and commitment to improve our roads as we move forward.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I thank the honourable Minister for his reply and for the work being undertaken in the Wainibuka and Delaidogo area and also in the area of Matanikorovatu, the access to Kubukawa Road. I have heard of the road that the Government intends to cut from Koronivia across to Nakasi, but this is the first I have heard of one from Koronivia to Nadawa. Can the honourable Minister explain a bit more on when this is going to take place, because I think you will need a bridge to be able to do that?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, that work is currently under progress. I will need to get the completion date - I do not have it with me, but it should not take long, it will be soon before we finish out the work.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, while talking about the Suva-Nausori corridor, recently we have seen that FRA and LTA have been putting a lot of those orange plastic dividers on the road, because of the new road layout to ease the flow of traffic. However, within weeks of months after this was installed, we only can see the black base without any orange plastic divider on top. Can the honourable Minister inform us where have those dividers gone to and if they are willing to replace it, because there is no signage apart from the hours that LTA officers are present to illustrate the movement of the traffic, even with the red light. Can we have an update on this, please? Where are those orange dividers?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is a good question. From the information I have, some were unlawfully removed. Those dividers were put there after, as you may have heard or as I have already updated, it is a traffic flow assessment, which indicates that if the right side is left open, it will improve the traffic. It showed that the traffic has improved. In some instances, some of those were unlawfully removed.

However, the other reason, and this is an ongoing exercise, because some of the places where that was put may not have resulted in what was the original objective, it could have created more issues such as, it is a risk to the safety of pedestrians who might be crossing at the same time. That needs to be better co-ordinated. As I have said, it is an ongoing work in progress, but at the same time, honourable Usamate was part of the last traffic light study, which had been done by various agencies, including the Koreans and Australians. So right now, we are reviving that. If you add that plus the traffic light coordination, where the traffic lights are remotely controlled, subject to CCTV, I forgot the name of the automated traffic systems, then there will be much better improvement.

HON. J. USAMATE. - Mr. Speaker, Sir, I congratulate FRA for that work. I think that has made a lot of difference to the traffic, having one lane that is open for those that are moving on. I have a question because there are some roads in the Central Division that are not actually FRA roads, they are built on iTaukei sort of developed subdivisions. Rokara, for instance, the road going to Sakoca, big population. I know they are not on FRA roads, but there is always this constant request for assistance on those roads, and some of them are not getting any buses. Are there any plans for roads like that - Rokara and the road going down to Savutalele?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as a Government, a road is a road, we provide the service. Unlike the previous government, sorry, not the previous government, I mean, unlike in the past, there was always this argument - this is a FRA road, this is a non-FRA road. What we are emphasising now, no, you look at what the needs of the people are. That is the change we have inculcated into the Ministry and also FRA on how best to serve, to ensure that the roads are serviced,

et cetera. In terms of the developer for the subdivision, they need to work closely, and I have stressed that with FRA on the need to hand over that road, so that process is ongoing. In the meantime, if there is a deterioration, we will not wait for that argument. We just go in and try to improve the road so that people around there are not badly affected.

First Home Ownership Initiative - Extension of
(Question No. 200/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Housing and Local Government inform Parliament on whether the First Home Ownership Initiative will be extended to support families who have been evicted from informal settlements?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. The First Home Ownership Initiative has been one of Government's flagship programmes to support Fijian families into secure and dignified housing. Since its inception in 2014, the initiative has enabled thousands of households to either purchase or construct their first home with targeted grant assistance scaled income levels. Over the years, the programme has been reviewed and strengthened to ensure that it remains responsive to the needs of our people, particularly those in the low and middle-income brackets.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in light of recent developments, the Ministry has recognised the need to extend support to families who have been evicted from informal settlements. Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality is that informal settlements have long provided shelter for many low-income families who, due to affordability constraints have been unable to access a formal housing market. However, when evictions occur, whether on State land or freehold land, even on private land, families are left in highly vulnerable circumstances, often without a clear pathway to secure tenure or affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to address this, the Ministry has developed a proposal for the establishment of the First Home Grant Assistance Programme for low-income earners or families evicted from some informal settlements around the country. This programme will be piloted under Category 1, Tier 1 of the First Home Ownership Initiative and is specifically designed to provide targeted assistance to those most affected by eviction. Mr Speaker, Sir, the pilot programme will focus on families with a combined household income of up to \$30,000 who are residing in Veidogo in Vatuwaqa, Nabua Muslim League, as well as Kilikali Settlement in Nadera who have been issued with eviction notices.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a total of more than 600 households have been identified across these settlements. These families represent some of the most vulnerable in our society. It is imperative that the Government provides them with a structured pathway to secure housing.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the proposed pilot, eligible families will be able to access grant assistance of \$50,000 to construct their first home and \$30,000 to purchase their first home. This level of support recognises both the financial challenges faced by low-income households and the need to provide a meaningful contribution that can bridge the affordability gap. Importantly, the programme will not operate in isolation. It will be jointly administered by the Ministry of Housing and the Housing Authority.

The Ministry will be responsible for verifying applications against socio-economic survey data and preparing eligibility reports. The Housing Authority will assess loan applications and

manage the location of social housing lots. This partnership ensures that the programme is both rigorous in its assessment and practical in its delivery.

To safeguard the integrity of the programme and to ensure the grant achieves the intended purpose of long-term ownership, the Ministry proposes that a 10-year caveat be placed on all properties acquired through this assistance. This means that recipients will not be able to sell their property in the first decade or first 10 years without first obtaining approval from the Ministry and refunding the full value of the grant. This safeguard is critical to prevent the misuse of public funds and to ensure that the programme delivers lasting and benefits to families rather than short-term financial gain.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of financing, the Ministry has been allocated a budget of \$3.5 million for the 2025-2026 financial year with the support of the First Home Ownership Initiative. Of this, \$2 million is directed towards Category 1, which comprised households that are earning \$2,000 and below and \$1.5 million towards Category 2, which covers families and households that are earning household income of above \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, within Category 1, an allocation of \$500,000 has been earmarked specifically for the pilot programme to support families evicted from informal settlements. This earmarking demonstrates the Coalition Government's commitment to prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable while also ensuring that the programme is implemented in a physically responsible manner.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to emphasise that this programme is currently at the proposal stage and will be approved soon by Cabinet for consideration. This pilot programme will allow us to test the programme and policy, assess its effectiveness and make any necessary refinements before determining the scope for wider implementation. This phased approach reflects the Coalition Government's commitment to evidence-based policymaking, ensuring the resources are used efficiently, and the programme delivers real and measurable outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the extension of the First Home Ownership Initiative to support families evicted from informal settlements represents a significant step forward in our efforts to provide inclusive, equitable and sustainable housing solutions. It reflects the Coalition Government's recognition that housing is not merely a commodity, but a foundation for dignity, stability and opportunity. By piloting this programme, we are taking a careful step that is decisive towards ensuring that no family is left behind and those most in need are given the support they require to build a secure future.

HON. S. NAND.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, could the honourable Minister update Parliament on how many families or individuals have been assisted and what is the total value of the assistance that has gone to the community since its inception in 2014?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, since the inception of this programme in 2014, a total of 4,427 applicants, with a total housing grant of \$45,655,000 have been assisted. The composition of the above is as follows:

- For those who have earned housing income below \$50,000 — a total of 3,180 applicants have been assisted, with a value of \$42,205,000.
- For those who are earning above \$50,001 to \$100,000 — a total of 668 applicants were assisted, with a value of \$7,450,000.
- Those who were assisted through the Land Purchase Programme — a total of 579 applicants were assisted, with a total value of \$5.6 million.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the honourable Minister if there is any age criteria with regard to the application of this particular grant, and if the Ministry or Government is looking into removing this particular age criterion, because we have seen the majority of our people, they start building their first home after the age of 40. Can these people who are above the age of 40, or above the age of 50, but this is their first home, can they apply for the first home grant?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for asking a very good question. For the information of the House, at the moment, there is no age limit for this assistance. As long as the applicant can produce, and also confirm to the Ministry of Housing that they have secured and have a registered title, or a building which has a registered title on it, to be able to purchase, use this scheme, in addition to whatever savings that they have, through FNPF, or in other means through a bank, help them acquire the property or land through this First Home Ownership assistance grant.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are a lot of former and informal settlements where they have arrangements with the landowners, and I am talking, for instance, in the Kalabu area, where the settlements are now incorporated into the village boundaries, even though they come from different parts of Fiji. Would the people who had been allowed to live in these particular settlements be allowed to access that funding or was it only those who are in the *Vola ni Kawa Bula* to that area?

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the main criteria is they must have a registered title, but for those who have been incorporated or part of villages, they can access through the Rural Housing Assistance Grant to get assistance as far as housing assistance is concerned.

Extension of EFL Gridline - Dreketi to Nasarowaqa
(Question No. 201/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works and Meteorological Services and Transport inform Parliament on whether there are plans to extend the EFL gridline from Dreketi to Nasarowaqa in Vanua Levu, or even beyond?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in short, yes, the Government does intend to extend the grid from Dreketi to Nasarowaqa. The consultation and survey was completed, posted and done some years ago during the last government. However, somehow it is yet to be funded, given the prioritisation process. Just to share the total cost of electrifying communities in this area is around \$22 million.

Communities consist of 10 large farming communities with 648 households. We will resubmit the petition to the Ministry of Finance for the costings for reconsideration in the coming financial year 2026/2027. The plans include a request for a 33-kilovolt line first, main line along the Dreketi to Nasarowaqa highway at a cost of \$10 million in the first phase and the low voltage lines for the communities in the later stages, the second phase.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in addition to this, just to update, the EFL is currently clearing backlogs in terms of grid extension. There were 72 in the backlogs, but now we are working on it. It is now 54.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this backlog is expected to be completed in the next 12 months, and after that, the Government will work on providing funding for the next phases or next projects. Households

around this area currently have installed solar home systems, whereby the communities have access to lights and electrical loads of less than 300 watts.

The Government has secured \$118 million in international funding to expand renewable energy for rural communities through the Fiji Rural Electrification Fund. The purpose, as I already mentioned, is designed to attract private and development partner investment.

In that fund, we are currently working on 21 communities. Three have already been attended and 18 will be progressively attended, so that we can complete all works in these 21 communities by December 2026. This also includes those whose current solar systems are redundant or also have issues with batteries, et cetera.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Honourable Minister, it is good to hear that there are plans to extend the grid from Dreketi to Nasarowaqa, but is this project listed under your list of backlog projects or is it part of the list that will come after you have cleared the remaining 54?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned, it is not in the backlog but we will include it in the next lot, given that we have to expand the funding which is there, and then the next funding will cover this specific project or area which you have questioned.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would just like to ask the honourable Minister whether there is any plan then to extend that down to Lekutu and perhaps from Nabouwalu, the existing Government Station, to move it further up towards that particular road?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Yes, definitely, that is something which any Government will look at or consider in terms of grid extension. We will take that into consideration.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- The honourable Minister explained about the backlog. We have noticed that in the past three budgets there has not been any new money coming in for the grid extension. There has been backlog ever since this rural electrification programme started.

Why has this backlog taken three years? Why has EFL not been able to complete this backlog in three years? As I am saying, there were backlogs, but still new projects were being done and funded continuously all the way from 2016 until 2022. From 2023 no budget came in.

The money was already paid to EFL prior to 2022, but it has taken them three years to complete this backlog, and as stated by you, I think only completed 18 or so from 72 down to 54-56. It seems like it will take another two to three years to complete this backlog if we continue on the same track. Can the Honourable Minister explain the actual reason as to why this backlog and delay in completing these projects?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- I thank the honourable Member for that supplementary question. We have to look back into the history of this whole situation. You mentioned from 2016, fortunately, we came in 2022. If you really look into the situation, it basically boils down to the nature of Energy Fiji Limited – the nature is now, it is a commercial operation. That commercial operation or business is based on business decisions, and the last government created the entity. The nature of the entity was created by the last government and the divestment to foreign investors, et cetera.

Why did you do that? We as a Government we are not irresponsible just to close down everything and revert back. Together with the Department of Energy, there was a diagnostic study with International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). This diagnostic study, we look at the current

inefficiencies or issues that overlap legal, regulatory or otherwise, which we are now moving forward with.

At the same time, we will also look at where rural electrification should be placed because right now, from that study, it is not placed as a priority in a commercial operation. As a business unit, rural electrification is not a viable business operation. That is the reality – in terms of allocation of resources to move the electrification, rural electrification grid, it is not a high priority as far as a commercial operation goes.

In addition, there were issues, I mean, the COVID-19 pandemic and the other one is issues with contractors - the outward movement of skilled manpower and the difficulties in procuring essential materials needed for rural electrification. It is all a combination of factors which resulted in that. Of course, because it is really within another entity, and also the Ministry just transfers the funds, so this is a balanced operation that we need to do. However, we are working on trying to look at the efficiencies and effectiveness and how best to restructure, to ensure that extension of rural electrification grid is done in a more efficient and effective way, so that is work in progress. Thank you.

WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies
(Question No. 202/2025)

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

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service and Public Enterprises, Trade, Cooperatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications update Parliament on Fiji's engagement in relation to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, including progress towards its entry into force, and the ongoing negotiations under the second phase of the Agreement?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank honourable Ravu for his question. The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, also referred to as Fish One, represents a landmark achievement in global efforts to curb harmful subsidies that contribute to overfishing and the depletion of marine resources. It is the first WTO agreement with a primary focus on sustainability, aligning closely with Sustainable Development Goal 14.6, which calls for the prohibition of subsidies that lead to overcapacity and overfishing.

The Agreement sets rules to stop Government from giving financial support to fishing companies in ways that damage the oceans, or that are involved in practices that damage the ocean's resources. Specifically, Fish One bans subsidies that:

- (1) support illegal fishing, so the Government cannot pay companies that fish without following the law;
- (2) help fishing of overfished stocks, meaning, Government cannot give money to encourage catching fish faster than they can naturally reproduce; and
- (3) encourage fishing in unmanaged parts of the high seas, so companies do not exploit areas where there are no rules to protect the fish.

It also makes sure that Government reports what subsidies they provide and encourages transparency and responsible management of fishing resources. Essentially, it is a global framework to protect fish stocks, to protect the ocean, and also to protect the livelihoods that depend on them.

Interesting, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that as we now head into November (*Vula i Balolo Levu*), I do

not know what changes those living by the seas have noticed in the fish, and whether they refrain from eating fish at this time because some of them get to be poisonous.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji has been a strong advocate for this Agreement because it protects our oceans, ensures sustainable livelihoods, and allows us to benefit from our fisheries responsibly. Following bipartisan support in Parliament, Fiji deposited its instrument of ratification with WTO on 24th October, 2023, becoming the first Pacific Island country to do so.

I am also pleased to inform that the Agreement entered into force on 15th September this year, after reaching the required threshold of two-thirds of the WTO membership. This marked the start of a new era in global fisheries governance, ensuring that trade rules contribute directly to the protection of the world's oceans.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, since the entry into force of phase one, the Government has been working closely with stakeholders to implement the Agreement. This means, making sure we have the right systems and coordination mechanisms in place to meet our obligation.

In August of this year, Mr. Speaker, Sir, a workshop was held with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), to build awareness and introduce a self-assessment tool that helps us gauge our readiness to meet our obligation. After the Agreement's entry into force in September, we hosted an in-country meeting in October with all key agencies to review data and identify what needs to be reported to the WTO.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, a validation workshop is now scheduled for November where officials will review and confirm the findings and information and data gathered so far. This will help Fiji identify any policy or information gaps, strengthen coordination across agencies and ensure that we are fully prepared to meet our international obligations.

Work is also ongoing at WTO under the second wave of negotiations, often referred to as Phase Two. In that endeavour, Fiji continues to work closely with our Pacific brothers and sisters to advance our shared regional interests. This phase seeks to address outstanding issues not covered in the Fish Agreement, particularly subsidies that lead to over-capacity and over-fishing, while ensuring special and differential treatment for Developing and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Fiji is now preparing to participate in the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference where members aim to conclude the remaining elements of fisheries subsidies negotiations. Due to Fiji's proactive engagement of leadership throughout the negotiations, we have been offered the role of Vice Chair, reflecting the confidence of other WTO members in our contribution. I congratulate the former Minister for Commerce and Trade for his role, leading to the confidence expressed for Fiji in his naming to be in that role.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji will continue to participate actively in the negotiations, advocating for a balanced outcome that preserves the sustainability of our marine resources while recognising the unique challenges faced by our Small Island Developing States.

We continue to call for adequate policy space so that countries like Fiji can make full sustainable use of their fisheries resources. This is important, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because our oceans are not just about the conservation, they are also a resource for income, jobs and economic development for our people.

Our intervention also highlights the need for technical assistance and capacity building to help developing countries implement the new rules effectively. Fiji's participation will ensure that

the interest of small island economies are well represented in the global community, as the global community moves forward towards comprehensive and sustainable outcomes.

HON. F.S. KOYA.– Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Prime Minister for the update and I know that you have started doing this work but I know this question maybe a little bit too inquisitive but we hope you can answer it.

Within the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, we all know Fiji has a very high standing when we started from day one when we did the negotiations on this particular Agreement. Within the Agreement itself, honourable Prime Minister, there is a Fish Fund. That particular Fish fund was formed in order to assist Developing and LDCs with respect to the implementation of that particular WTO Agreement which, as you rightfully mentioned, Sir, is historical and it took quite a lot to get done.

My question is, was there a deadline, from what I understand and you can correct me if I am wrong, Sir, with respect to those proposals that needed to be sent to access that particular fund for the implementation of the Agreement. Have we done so - have we made those project proposals?

I would be grateful if you could answer that, Sir, or have we not made those particular issues available to them, whether we can access those funds or not because I think the time may have expired now?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, can I get updated and return to the House with the response to his question?

Public Infrastructure Projects - \$1.6 Billion
(Question No. 203/2025)

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA asked the Government, without notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Finance, Commerce and Business Development provide an update to Parliament on the progress of the \$1.6 billion worth of public infrastructure projects that were recently announced?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank honourable Qereqeretabua for her question. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the honourable Prime Minister for his confidence in me to take over this role.

I also wish to thank the congratulatory messages that came through, both from the Government side, as well as the Opposition. Thank you for your confidence in me.

I also wish to thank and acknowledge the two former Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers, honourable Professor Prasad and honourable Kamikamica, for the work already done in those two Ministries that I am taking over, and those are two big shoes to fill. I will continue from there, and I will continue to need your support

Mr. Speaker, Sir, investing in public infrastructure is central to Government's commitment to build a stronger and more resilient economy, and improving the wellbeing of our people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji continues to face significant challenges, including aging infrastructure due to past underinvestment, increasing urbanisation, increasing cost for maintenance and upgrades, and the impact of climate change on our existing State assets. These challenges have existed in the

past, exist in the present and will continue to test us in the future. However, this Government is focused on investing in solutions for building strong systems and ensuring that our infrastructure supports a resilient and inclusive economy for generations to come.

While there are many projects currently underway across the country, I wish to highlight a few significant projects that are part of the \$1.6 billion package of major externally funded public infrastructure. These are investments in bridges, water and wastewater, health, flood mitigation, and road improvement projects. These projects represent substantial investment in our nation's future, supporting economic growth, creating jobs, and strengthening the resilience of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the first project is the Critical Bridges Resilience Project. Firstly, we are investing more than \$450 million for the replacement of four major bridges, including Lami, Medraukutu, Sabeto and Viseisei Bridges, through this Project funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). These four Bridges are critical public assets as they connect our cities and towns along the Queens Highway. This Project will improve domestic connectivity and will be made climate and disaster resilient.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this five-year Project is financed by the ADB and the World Bank. The total financing for the project is close to USD200 million, or approximately FJD458 million, with the overall financing package highly concessional with the grant element of over 50 percent.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the project has started with the support from ADB and the World Bank. The tender for design and construction has been advertised and is currently in the bid evaluation phase, and tender will be awarded by the end of this year. Construction work is anticipated to begin in the next financial year.

The second is on the Healthy Oceans and Water Supply Improvement Project. We have embarked on investing in the water and wastewater projects through the Healthy Oceans and Water Supply Improvement Project. Mr. Speaker, Sir, time and again, we have reiterated that 48 percent of the water produced in our dams and reservoirs are lost through non-revenue water leakage. In simple terms, this means that almost half of the treated water does not reach our taps as it gets leaked out.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a USD171 million or FJD385 million project, which will –

- double the treatment capacity of the Kinoya Wastewater Treatment Plant;
- support the financing of a performance-based contract for non-revenue water reduction, and
- improve regional capacity and training in the water and wastewater sector.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a five-year project from 2026 to 2030. In December 2024, for the first time, we have engaged in a performance-based contract with a Spanish company to reduce water leakage to 20 percent in the next five years.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the doubling of the Kinoya Wastewater Treatment Plant to a capacity of 180,000 equivalent population is expected to meet the demand until 2035 in the Kinoya catchment area and has the scope for further expansion to meet future needs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Water Authority of Fiji (WAF) is working on the preparation of tender documents for the upgrade works. The design, bidding and awarding of contracts will be completed in 2027, and construction is expected to start in 2028.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we can also see the establishment of a regional water and wastewater operators training programme under this project.

The third project is the Nadi Flood Alleviation Project. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a five-year project with more than \$400 million planned investment undertaken in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP).

As part of the first phase of implementation, airport protection works will commence in this financial year. In addition, JICA and AIFFP are currently finalising the feasible and technical solutions for structural interventions. This includes detailed flood modelling, feasibility studies and comprehensive design work. We will then decide on the best technical intervention to be implemented.

Before that, the health project in the health sector, and with the support from the Australian Government, we are formulating an Infrastructure Master Plan for a new national referral hospital to meet the healthcare needs of Fiji and the broader Pacific region and into the future. We have embarked on a comprehensive health sector reform as well, and the CWM Redevelopment Programme with more than \$500 million investment funds through the World Bank, ADB and the OPEC Fund.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, phase one of the project includes the establishment and formulation of the Clinical Services Plan and the Priority Infrastructure Plan Assessment. This Assessment outlines 37 costed key priority projects estimated at FJD63 million. The Australian Government has extended an additional commitment of \$15 million in support of this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, these projects will be executed in a series of carefully structured phases, supported through a combination of Government investment and partnership support from our valued development partners. The four projects are just the beginning. Simultaneously, we have been undertaking significant infrastructure projects, including the Fiji Road Upgrade and Improvement Project, upgrading rural and maritime roads, schools, infrastructure investments, jetty upgrade, rural electrification projects, rural water projects, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on rural investments, we are investing in our people. We are creating jobs and empowering communities, and with better roads and bridges means faster travel, smoother transport of goods, improved access for rural and remote communities.

Before I conclude, I would like to reiterate that in the last few budgets, we have continued to provide increased funding for the infrastructure sector including stronger foundation for resilient and sustainable growth. We will continue to invest in the sector to ensure that all Fijians have safe, reliable and adequate public infrastructure that meets their needs and supports sustainable economic growth across the nation.

MR. SPEAKER.- Before I give the floor to my deputy, I would just like to add Chair's voice in congratulating you, honourable Minister, on your new appointment and I speak on behalf of the Secretariat of your Parliament in wishing you every success.

HON. L.S. QEREQERETABUA.- Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the honourable Minister, can you briefly just advise us on the key terms and conditions of this \$1.6 billion funding?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have briefly explained some of the terms, however, there are four details as follows:

- (1) World Bank IDA Concessional Funding which is a 40-year loan inclusive of a 10-year grace period; service-charge interest rate of around 0.7 percent per year. It means concessionality of over 50 percent in present value terms or what we call the grant element of funding.
- (2) ADB concessional resources, 40-year as well, inclusive of 10-year grace period and interest rate of 1 percent. It means a grant element of around 50 percent as well.
- (3) OPEC fund, concessional funding, a 30-year loan term, inclusive of a 10-year grace period and interest rate of around 1.75 percent per annum.
- (4) World Bank and ADB non-concessional resources, which is a 15-year term, three-year grace period and market interest rate linked to Secured Overnight Financing Rate (SOFR) plus a margin. So, we have not been borrowing at market rates recently. All major projects are funded through the concessional resources.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would also like to congratulate the honourable Minister for being the new Minister of Finance. I recall when we were taking concessional loans during our time in office, there was a big objection from the other side. What you are doing is basically the same and we appreciate it because we need infrastructure. We started it, and you are continuing which is a good thing.

My question is, how will the project address skill shortages in the country and how will you ensure quality products come out of it, in other words, quality infrastructure? We have seen if monitoring is not done well then slipshod jobs are done, and at the end of the day, the infrastructure is left to the government to fix at the later stage.

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think I have explained all of those projects in detail - the background, plans and the processes that comes with it. The Government and Ministry for Finance will ensure that all those are done within the specified terms as mentioned.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to congratulate my former Chair for taking up his new position though I had sent him a message earlier on and I think he will do a wonderful job.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Minister has explained very well that capital investment is very much needed. If we look at the previous budget, I think the CapEx to OpEx ratio was around 82 percent to 18 percent, according to your explanation. Now, being the new Minister, are you looking to increase the CapEx rather than such a huge amount of OpEx of 82 percent? Since you have answered that CAPEX is needed to improve the economy, as a new Minister, what are your plans to improve CapEx?

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.A.MAHARAJ.- Let the Minister answer!

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Thank you for the question. Yes, definitely we will do that for the betterment of this nation.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Nadi Flood Alleviation Project, the Ministry of Agriculture started it. This is about the construction of, if I remember correctly, 10 retention dams,

and then the study that was undertaken by JICA. With this new project, honourable Minister, is it going to cover both or will it specifically concentrate on the JICA recommendations?

HON. E.Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, it will cover both. Concentration was taken from both - the previous report as well as the new report that was done.

Written Questions

Civil Servants on Suspension (Question No. 204/2025)

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

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service, Public Enterprises, Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications inform Parliament, on a year-by-year basis from 2023 to September 2025, with respect to the following:

- (a) the number of civil servants who are currently under suspension; and
- (b) the total cost to Government in salaries and benefits paid to them during their suspension periods?

MR. SPEAKER.- Before I ask the honourable Prime Minister to answer the question, likewise, I would like to congratulate, I do not know whether one should congratulate or commiserate with your new portfolio, honourable Prime Minister.

(Laughter)

¹ HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I hereby table the response to the question, as allowed for under Standing Order 45(3) in the Standing Orders.

Construction of Farm Roads – 2023 Todate (Question No. 205/2025)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Agriculture and Waterways update Parliament on the following:

- (a) the number of farm roads that were constructed by Division from 2023 to-date; and
- (b) the number of farm roads that are expected to be constructed per Division in the current financial year?

² HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have the answer to the question.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please, kindly take note that there will be two

¹ Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 204/2025 tabled by the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service, Public Enterprises, Trade, Co-operatives, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure I.

² Reply to Written Question No. 205/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Agriculture and Waterways, under Standing Order 45(3), is appended as Annexure II.

motions by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs. The third motion on today's Order Paper has been withdrawn by the Chairperson.

CONSOLIDATED REVIEW REPORT ON THE FIJI ROADS AUTHORITY 2019-2021 ANNUAL REPORTS

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

That Parliament debates the Consolidated Review Report on the Fiji Roads Authority 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Annual Reports, which was tabled on 3rd September, 2025.

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

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Standing Committee on Social Affairs Committee noted that Fiji Roads Authority (FRA) is responsible for the planning, development and maintenance of Fiji's road infrastructure. The infrastructure primarily consists of approximately 6,360 kilometres of road and 1,388 bridges, 21 jetties, 10 landings and 9,000 streetlights.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee in its deliberations highlighted a few recommendations:

- (1) FRA must ensure that it maintains operational efficiency, effectiveness and quality control, as it moves to carry out the functions it used to be outsourced.
- (2) FRA must support local contractors and provide sufficient training and monitoring so they deliver the work standards.
- (3) FRA must ensure maintenance and upgrading of roads, streetlights, footpaths and drainage to alleviate complaints from ratepayers.
- (4) FRA must carry out a valuation of its assets and ensure such valuations are carried out regularly.
- (5) FRA must work with relevant authorities to relocate people who have settled in the areas that has been earmarked for road infrastructure development.
- (6) FRA must continue its staff participation in International Road Federation Programme and find other ways to address skill shortage; and
- (7) The collaboration between the FRA and PWD must be strengthened.

The Committee noted that the Fiji Road Authority's strategic priority areas are aligned with national government priorities and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee looks forward to the implementation and commitment on the recommendations put forward by the Committee.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I have a list of speakers with me. At the end of the debate, we will then invite the mover for his right of response.

HON. K.K. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, honourable Members, I rise to speak on behalf of the thousands of Fijians who drive, walk or travel our roads every single day – from farmers taking their produce to market to parents trying to get their children safely to school. This debate is not just about a report, it is about the everyday struggles of our people, the wasted hours in traffic, the damaged cars and the frustration of seeing potholes patched today and reopening next week.

The Fiji Road Authority Consolidated Report for 2019-2021 tells a very clear story that our road network is not keeping up with the needs of our people and that the Authority responsible is

struggling to deliver on its mandate. The Committee found that FRA took back many key functions after the termination of MWH in 2016. But instead of improving services, the Authority is now overburdened. They are short of engineers, technical officers and project managers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when there are not enough qualified people to design, monitor or inspect roadworks, it is the public that suffers. We see roads built without proper drainage, potholes appearing within months and bridges taking years to complete. That is not poor management, that is failure of responsibility to the people who pay for these roads through their taxes. The Committee was right to recommend that FRA must maintain operational efficiency and quality control—Recommendation 4.1. I say, quality control must not be a slogan, it must be a commitment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we only need to look around the country to see the truth. In places like Savusavu, especially Nakama, and Wainibuku here in Nakasi, the roads are in terrible shape, full of potholes, uneven surfaces, and it is dangerous after rainy weather. In rural areas like Bua, Macuata and Nadi backroads, our citizens' hard-earned vehicles are being damaged by oversized potholes.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. K.K. LAL.- How long must our people wait for safe and reliable roads?

The Committee noted that FRA's work has been affected by poor maintenance systems and limited capacity. That is absolutely true. The Authority must move from short-term fixes to long-term planning. Our people do not want to see greener pastures once a year, they want durable and lasting roads.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the biggest complaints from our people today is the inconsistent and oversized road humps appearing all over Fiji. Drivers from Lautoka to Suva and around Fiji are asking the same question. Who is designing these humps? Some are so high they scrape the bottom of vehicles, others are placed with no warning signs. Families in small cars, taxis and service vehicles are spending their hard-earned money repairing damages caused by their driving, by the very roads built to serve them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a perfect example of FRA's lack of national standards and coordination as per the Findings on 3.9 and 3.10. We need a uniform national standard for road humps—height, width, placement and signage. Speed control is very important, but it must be done sensibly, fairly and safely.

HON. L.D. TABUYA. - For example?

HON. K.K. LAL. – Sir, FRA's job is to make our roads safer, not to turn them into obstacle courses, and this is not a small issue. It affects every driver everyday.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, lack of coordination with municipal councils as per the reference in Findings in 3.9 and Recommendation 4.5. The Committee also noted the lack of co-ordination between FRA and municipal councils on the maintenance of roads, streetlights and drainage. This is a daily reality for the people in our towns and cities. One agency says that it is not our responsibility, while the other says that it is under FRA - residents are left in dark streets, flooded drains, broken footpaths and gravel roads.

During the former FijiFirst Government, these were tarsealed roads. For example, take a look at Nakama Road in Savusavu. The people do not care which department is responsible. They just want the work done. The FRA must work closely with the Councils and other agencies to deliver

results on the ground, not just excuses in reports.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with reference to Finding 3.15 and Recommendation 4.13 on Skills Development and Capacity Building. This Report confirms that FRA faces a severe shortage of engineers and technical staff. This is not new, but it is getting worse. We must invest in our own people. Government should work with universities and technical colleges to train more road engineers, project supervisors and skilled workers. Only then can we truly reduce our dependency on foreign consultants and ensure that knowledge stays in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the end of the day, this is not about reports or policies, it is not about politics, it is about our people. It is about the market vendor in Nausori coming from Muaniweni whose goods get spoilt because their truck gets stuck or damaged due to a pothole.

(Honourable Members interject)

HON. K.K. LAL. - It is about a teacher in our rural communities who risks her safety on a broken bridge. It is about a taxi driver in Suva who damages his car every week because of uneven road humps. Our people deserve better planning, standards and services.

The Standing Committee has provided a roadmap to its recommendation. Now it is up to the Government and FRA to act, not just write more plans, but to deliver real, visible results on the ground. As an Independent Member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I call for:

- (1) A national standard for road humps and traffic calming structures;
- (2) A performance audit of FRA to assess value for money;
- (3) Immediate action to repair deteriorating roads in rural and maritime areas, including Savusavu and Wainibuku; and
- (4) Strengthen co-ordination between FRA, municipal councils and public works departments.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I take my seat, our roads are the lifelines of our economy. Let us fix them with care, pride and respect for the people who use them.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me just, first, say ‘thank you’ to the Committee for the Report that has been produced on FRA. I think it is a very good report because it has a substantial number of recommendations which are very relevant. I say it is very relevant because these are issues that we have constantly raised with the honourable Minister, responsible for the roads and also for the Assistant Minister.

In short, Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the first recommendations that came out from the Committee says, that FRA must ensure it maintains operational efficiency, effectiveness and quality control.

Now, let me address one of the issues with respect to quality control. I remember quite a little while ago, I had quickly mentioned to the honourable Minister for our roads with respect to the road humps, an issue honourable Ketan Lal just raised. Now, what was actually happening was that if there was someone who suddenly decided that we are going to put road humps, there was no standard that actually existed. Road humps were put on a just do it basis, basically without any measurement, and they were all different sizes all around the country.

After having spoken to the honourable Minister, they seem to have taken a turn, and now they are actually being done with respect to some standards that exist, but these are the things that we must look at. These are small things, but they are noticeable, and this is where the consumers suffer

- road humps appearing in the middle of the night, and when you travel the next day, they are not there. The signage is not actually done properly. These are little things, but this is what affects the public with respect to how they perceive the FRA.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also wanted to touch on a couple of other things that are part of the Report. I will not go through all of them, but one of the other issues was about the support for local contractors. We have a lot of local contractors, and I think the Committee identified that we must support our local contractors and provide sufficient training for them and monitoring so that they deliver the standards that they work with, and they are adhered to.

There are a lot of times you will see that there is bleeding occurs on the road. I am not sure if everyone knows this, but if you see a little shiny part when you are travelling on the road, that is actually called bleeding. That means the undersurface or the foundation below the road has not been done properly. These are things that are quite common but need to be picked up by the FRA when our engineers actually go and do the inspections. What is happening on the ground, no one knows.

I am glad that it has been picked by the Committee and put into this Report. It is something the FRA can look at. I know the honourable Minister faces a lot of challenges at FRA purely because we are losing a lot of our good people who are able to do this, but it is something that we can overcome. There is a lot of support that is being given to Fiji from our development partners on these things.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I remember that there was a company in Fiji that was building roads, and at times they would refuse to take contracts because they were not going to deviate from the standards that they were supposed to be putting roads in because they put their name on it.

Today, Sir, those roads that have been built by that particular company I will not mention the names, they still stand the test of time, and they are actually done really well. I think the honourable Prime Minister may remember this, Sir, there was a company called Dillingham Wilkins-Green which did our original highways. They were done at a fantastic standard, I am talking about from Nadi to Sigatoka and Deuba they stood the test of time and all it required was rip and remake to actually fix these things. Now, those standards, I do not know where they have gone. Everything seems to be done on a shortcut basis.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I probably have a little bit more to get close to the road because I ride motorcycles, and I get everyone complaining to me, saying the road here is bad, road there is bad, potholes are really bad. It is bad, we know that it is not that bad, but it is something that needs addressing quickly and also with respect to our highways that exist, Nadi-Suva and also right from Nadi all the way to Suva via Rakiraki, et cetera. Those are major highways and major trade routes, et cetera, that need to be constantly looked at.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that the Report mentioned, I think 4.6, you spoke about monitoring the performance of all contractors. A few contractors want to put their metal onto the roads, they need to make sure that they perform in terms of standards. One other thing before I finish off, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is an issue regarding bitumen. Now, from what I understand, I think this is something that really needs to be looked at. There are a few bitumen suppliers in Fiji. I stand corrected. From what I understand, there is only one that exists and has been a continuous bitumen supplier to our roads for many, many years and obviously done extremely well out of it. That is something that needs to be looked at. I am glad the Committee has identified that.

With respect to working with other ministries, et cetera, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just happened to be in Nadi a week ago, and one of our premier roads – I am sure the honourable Minister for Tourism

will appreciate this. The road from Nadi Airport to Denarau, our premier destination. I actually saw things, I complained to the honourable Assistant Minister for Roads and I am sure he has looked at it. The lights have gone off. We built those things and, it is not safe anymore. Even driving around there at night, the paintwork is actually removed from the road.

This showcases our premier destination. This needs to be looked at on a regular basis. Why is it that the streetlights that exist between that back road from Denarau all the way to Mountain View, half of the lights are gone, they are missing. These are the things that need to be checked, rechecking, and making sure we have a full-time crew on these particular places. This showcases our country, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Having said all that, in the last six months or so, we have seen a marked improvement, and I am sure the honourable Minister has been active trying to get people to perform properly.

The last recommendation was the FRA must continue its staff participation in the International Road Federation programme to find other ways to address skill shortages. This is something that is important to us, Sir, the skill shortages. I think we also must make sure that we engage with our development partners to ensure we get the right kind of people doing the right kind of job and that we check on them when they are doing it.

MR. SPEAKER.- I think we will suspend our proceedings for afternoon break now. However, before we do, I will entertain a suspension motion for the purposes of complying with Standing Orders with respect to sitting times.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, we need to complete the current debate on the Fiji Roads Authority and also the next one on Land Transport Authority.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion, if any.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

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

The Parliament adjourned at 3.59 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 4.36 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE CONSOLIDATED REVIEW REPORT OF THE FIJI ROADS AUTHORITY 2019-2021 ANNUAL REPORTS

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the motion on the Fiji Roads Authority, but before that, I would like to reply to the last two speakers from the Opposition. I think what they were mentioning, a lot has been done, but if we look at it in percentages, a lot of positives have been done in terms of roads. Their negativity is just about 10 percent, the positive is 90 percent. That is what I am trying to emphasise here. You cannot come here and pontificate the negatives about potholes, et cetera. I mean, a lot has been done, and I think we really need to put that in perspective when you look at the period under review 2019-2020.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when we came in and appointed a new board, we faced a cash crisis, and we had already highlighted that. There were systems, governance breakdowns, a huge cash flow crisis, crippling FRA and we had spent the capital expenditure in half a year. Just imagine that in half a year you spend the capital expenditure, and there are literally no capital funds to operate since it is with huge areas. That is why when we came in, the contractors had stopped working, and there had to be drastic measures taken. This is why, at the beginning of 2023, we had to go to the bank and obtain a \$50 million overdraft in order to keep operating FRA. The cash flow crisis had a significant impact on the delivery of services.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when you look at some of the issues raised in the Report it originates at that time from 2020-2021, and that is why some of the issues raised are currently under control and being addressed. At that time, that is why I am saying the last two contributors were just generalisations made from I suppose superficial observations, but the crux of the matter was when we had to do a special audit during the time immediately after this report. The origins of the problems were highlighted from what was happening during the time of this report and leading on to this special audit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, some of the findings I would like to share, which is not in this Report. The total cost variation and escalation of \$405 million, which happened at that time, was largely facilitated and approved by flying minutes. This is a very significant amount of \$405 million exceeded the annual capital budget approved for each of the three years. It was equivalent to about 10 percent of the national budget, audit question the processes, including preliminary and feasibility studies not carried out, changes in project scope after the tender was awarded, and first tenders not called for significant changes to scope.

Under the maintenance programme, there were inconsistencies noted in the application of cost escalation formulas applied by the RIB and RIME contractors. The Office of the Auditor General observed that the FRA accepted these cost escalation claims made by the contractors and facilitated payments without any independent verifications.

Retention funds owed to contractors were utilised by the Authority due to its cash flow crisis. These retention funds are supposed to go back to the contractors on completion of their work. There were no allocations for emergency works, and there were a significant number of key management and middle management positions which remain vacant. What I am stressing here is that what is being raised from the other side, pronouncements which are superficial, but which do not really give us a true picture of what is actually happening.

Some of the recommendations, which also mirror what is in the Report of the Committee, include having stringent processes for project planning, feasibility study, design and

engineering, contract management, and also the timely involvement of all stakeholders, EFL, TFL, et cetera. I am just sharing some of those which are also in the Report. In terms of all these recommendations, 4.1, operational efficiency and effectiveness, and that is currently being built in terms of not only the various technical issues regarding management, but also in terms of building up the internal core capacity of FRA, which they are working towards very effectively. The supply chain processes, this is also mentioned, especially aggregate and bitumen, and FRA has worked on expanding the comprehensive database of approved aggregate supplies to ensure selection of high-quality, compliant, and geographically suitable sources.

Regarding contractors, sufficient training and monitoring, of course, there is currently improved monitoring from the FRA and more vigorous comprehensive review of maintenance contracts. It is on track to call for new tenders and award new contracts by June 2026. They are adopting a hands-on approach, especially from FRA engineers.

Moving forward, Recommendation 4.4, the need to liaise closely with the various stakeholders, is mentioned in the respective ministries. Easing traffic congestion, I already mentioned that in terms of what we are doing about traffic congestion. Moving forward, in terms of the latest technologies and working with various stakeholders, including our development partners.

Improvement in the payment system, again, to our subcontractors who are paid on time. Again, this is an ongoing exercise. All payments are verified and released on time, and, of course, in collaboration with the Ministry of Lands and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs. Sure, there are issues where there are lapses, but as an organisation, as a ministry, we are continually working to improve those areas as highlighted in the Report and mentioned by the Opposition.

As I mentioned, it is not easy when we came in, but from that time until now, there has been a lot of work done to improve. With the reintroduction of PWD, the work is to complement each other, as I already mentioned, to cover all areas, including from highways to community roads, and even access into villages.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I would like to thank the Committee for the work that it has done. Looking at the work that was done by the FRA for these two periods, as I was going through the Report, one of the things that the former honourable Deputy Prime Minister always used to say, 16 years of nothing. You just look at this Report and see all that was done, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

In the Central Division, the Kasavu Slip, the Namata Village Access Road, the Nakorosule-Nawaisoma Road, and even before that I personally walked along that river, crossing it 23 times to get to the road that went up to Nakida, the Kiuva-Kaba Peninsular Road, Nadarivatu-Nadrau Road, Draubuta Access Road, Nadi Road Upgrades, Koroinasolo, Kavula, Bainikea, Dreketi Lailai, Lekutulevu, the Nakodu Crossing in Koro, the Savusavu Crossing in Ra, the Modular Bridges Packages, Nabalabelo in Navaga, Emuri Irish Crossing, Tamavua-i-Wai Bridge, Waidamu Bridge, Lagi-Duavata Village Access Road, Korovuli Bridge, Nakasava, Korovula, Vesidrua, Low-Level Crossing programmes in Nayarabale, Waibula, Taqaniwaqa and Naviavia, Mr. Speaker, Sir. There are a whole lot of other programmes that were going on at that particular time.

In the plan that they had, they had the Bulu Bridge, which I personally commissioned later on, Tavualevu, Velovelo, Matawale, Waidalice, Vuniyasi, Wainawi, Yaqara, where FRA had these crossings, jetties, et cetera. So, there was no 16 years of nothing - there was years of intense investment into infrastructure development, Sir.

The honourable Minister was saying, “Oh, I had all these problems.”. The problem was COVID-19, debt went up because we had to do it. We had to have a government that had the

gumption to do what it needed to do, sat down and did it. That is where the GDP to debt ratio went up, and obviously, after that, it went down again. When you want to talk about things, compare apples with apples, not oranges with stones, because these two do not match. We need to look at things correctly, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

In the recommendation, Mr. Speaker, Sir, there were a lot of very good recommendations. The asset base for FRA has a very important role. I think the honourable Minister has gone through a number of those recommendations, the very important ones.

On FRA to maintain its operational efficiency, effectiveness and quality control as it moves to carry out its function, I think one of the challenges that we have now, one of the precepts that we have in government all over the world, that you take out direct operational activities from government and put it into another body that does the direct activities and government focusses on policy and regulatory control. That is what we have done in things like water, electricity, et cetera.

However, in roads, we seem now to have a mixture of both. We have brought back the Public Works Department, and it is a decision by the Government, but we have to be able to manage this. As you can see, some of the problems that you have within FRA, the setup of FRA, as the honourable Tikoduadua will know, it was designed to be a body that then outsources to expertise.

However, you are now in a flux situation where you set up a body to outsource and get the expertise in, and you are trying to do it at the same time. I think this is something that Government will have to manage to be able to do that, in trying to keep the policy and the regulatory aspects and at the same time, growing the organisation to do the things that you wanted to outsource. I think that is going to be a challenge for this Government in all that it does.

There are a number of things that are happening there, Mr. Speaker, Sir. I am glad to see that we are supporting the local contractors. Previously, we used to have one contractor for one Division. Of course, our local contractors were not big enough to do the job. Now, they are breaking it down into zones.

There is then, again, another challenge there. The small ones that are covering the zones, do they have the capacity within them to maintain the quality levels that the large contractors who look after the whole Division were able to do? I think that is another challenge. If you look at the report, it always talks about the difficulty in monitoring quality. I think this is going to be a big challenge for FRA to be able to do it. I wish them well. A lot of the staff in FRA, I know, are young engineers. They have to be able to build up their competence to be able to manage their contractors.

I noticed also in the report that there is a deficit in terms of the capacity to be able to manage projects. One of the things they have decided to do, they are going to bring on their own engineers on board, but in terms of project management, because it is such a specialist skill and which is a core for FRA because of the volume of money that it gets from government to manage infrastructure projects, they are going to get people from outside to be able to do that at that level. I think that, to me, sounds sensible.

However, there is still this dilemma. If you want to have a system where you hive out the operation of the direct things and maintain the policy and regulatory functions, and here we are mixing it up. Perhaps, it is possible to be able to do it well, but I think that is going to be a challenge into the future.

One of the things that I have liked, Mr. Speaker, Sir, from the recommendations in that ensuring maintenance and upgrading of roads and what the FRA is now looking to do, is that it is

something they used to do before. They are outsourcing some of the vegetation control, the cleaning of the roads to the communities in various areas.

This is a very good development, Mr. Speaker, Sir. People have talked and asked about it. Of course, from FRA's point of view, it is much easier just to give one large contract and manage it, rather than a lot of small different contracts where your administrative costs and your overheads can be pretty high. However, I think it is an opportunity for our small communities all around Fiji to be able to get those small vegetation control, cleaning the roads-type of contracts that can give them a source of income.

I hope that the FRA will not only consider this for rural and maritime areas, but also for the informal settlements around Suva, Lautoka, where there are a lot of unemployed people, where they have a lot of social issues that they address everyday, and I hope that that is something that will help them, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

I think I only have 27 seconds, so I am just going to say three things that I would hope FRA puts into their books and that is, to try to make sure that they complete the road in Navakasiga from Nasau to Naivaka, to finish the road from Nasasa in Macuata up to Nadogo, and also the road that goes from Vunisea to Vacalea which has reached Joma and it is not moving. So, I ask Government to be able to put some more money into that particular road, so ultimately someone can get on a car from Vunisea and drive all the way to Vacalea. Right now, it is only up to Joma, Sir.

HON. E. Y. IMMANUEL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank the Committee for their Report and also the issues and challenges faced by FRA, and also commending on the report that is there from 2019 to 2021.

The first question the Committee should ask is, why were those reports late, going into 2025, discussing Annual Reports from 2019 to 2021? However, we have seen that FRA has been well funded from 2019 to date with a funding of \$300,000 and to-date, the budget is around \$400 million, so it is well funded in terms of budgetary provision.

However, one can see the weaknesses that were previously raised by some honourable Members and one is the utilisation of the budget in those years. In 2020, they only utilised 86 percent; in 2021, it was 82 percent; in 2022, it went up to 96 percent; and now, it is running at 94 percent and 96 percent. In the last financial year, it was around 92 percent. That is probably one of the reasons for some of the problems that are currently faced by FRA.

However, on the recommendations, the current Government has done a lot to improve and work on the issues and challenges faced by FRA on its operational efficiency, effectiveness and quality. The FRA is working to rebuild technical and operational capacity after the departure of MWH.

To address that, Mr. Speaker, Sir, FRA is strengthening its in-house expertise by hiring and training engineers and road professionals and using consultants for specialised tasks.

There is improvement on the supplier chain process, as advised by the honourable Minister. The FRA is strengthening supplier chain management to improve the efficiency, resilience and reliability of infrastructure delivery.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, FRA is adopting innovative procurement methods, like strategic sourcing and flexible contracting to handle market and logistic challenges.

There is support also for local contractors. The FRA acknowledges the need to improve contractor skills, training and performance monitoring, but is actively taking extra steps to address local contractors.

The FRA plans to use domestically funded projects to expand opportunity for Fijian contractors and consultants, supported by the new tender provision that promotes local participation while maintaining quality. There will continue to be challenges on our roads, however, FRA is tackling those challenges.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the Road Extension Programme, we have also tried to improve the payment system for subcontractors. This remains an ongoing process to ensure payments for verified contractors' claims are released on schedule.

To avoid delays in receiving the capital grant, Fiji Roads Authority maintains a sum of \$25 million in its overdraft facility with HFC Bank to cater for the timely payments to contractors.

The FRA has improved on the interdepartmental collaboration with the Ministry of Lands and the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs in carrying out its roles.

On the maintenance and upgrade of roads, streetlights, footpaths, and drainage, we can see some improvement and FRA has introduced a quarterly monitoring works programme that covers routine and periodic maintenance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, FRA is monitoring the contractors' performance as well. All contractors work against standard and can withhold approval if those are not met.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, Sir, FRA has set up multiple layers of inspection, audits and technical verification, and has defined key internal roles to manage maintenance and capital works. They have done additional work on registration work programme and the continuation of small zone contracts. The additional task they are doing is on asset evaluation - an issue which has been absent for many years and that is for us or Government to know the value of our road infrastructure assets.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if you look through our financial statements, you can see that our assets are not well-valued in our statements of assets. So, FRA has issued a request proposal for the valuation of its road infrastructure assets which closed on October 2025, and the valuation process is now underway.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is a lot that FRA is doing now, including strengthening staff participation in International Road Federation Programme, improved capacity and also improving the procurement process for the availability of raw materials.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, FRA is also working closely to re-establish the Public Works Department in advancing its work. It will take primary responsibility for maintenance and upgrade of Fiji National Road Network, including existing and expanding urban roads where the PWD which has been recently established by the Government will focus on rural roads and infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the guidance of the Ministry of Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport, both FRA and PWD will co-exist and collaborate more closely to deliver improved roading infrastructure across Fiji.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that is the last of the speakers on the motion. I will now call on the Chairperson of the Committee to speak in reply.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee noted the positive and negative contributions from honourable Members during this debate on this Consolidated Review Report on the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 Fiji Roads Authority Annual Reports.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to thank the Board Members, Executive Management and staff of Fiji Roads Authority for their commitment, dedication and unwavering support, which have been instrumental in the successful operation of FRA.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I humbly request the FRA and the Ministry of Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport for the successful implementation of the recommendations put forward by the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity and I fully support this motion before the House.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED REVIEW REPORT ON THE LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY 2017-2020 ANNUAL REPORTS

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

That Parliament debates the Consolidated Review Report on the Land Transport Authority 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Annual Reports, which tabled on 3rd September, 2025.

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

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker Sir, the Standing Committee on Social Affairs noted that Land Transport Authority (LTA) was established under the Land Transport Act 1998. Since then, LTA continued with the following functions:

- (1) Establishment of standards for registration and licensing of vehicles and drivers.
- (2) Develop and implement effective and efficient enforcement strategies consistent with road safety and protection of the environment.
- (3) Develop traffic management strategies in conjunction with relevant authorities.
- (4) Develop and improve customer service levels in all areas of operations.
- (5) Ensure equitable and affordable fare schedule for all Public Service Vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee, in its deliberations, highlighted the following recommendations:

- (1) Government must ensure that sufficient funding is provided to LTA to improve its capital projects and service delivery.
- (2) LTA to engage more authorised motor vehicle inspection agencies in the Northern Division and LTA must ensure that all these inspection agencies are in compliance as per the requirements of LTA.

- (3) Government must continue to provide adequate funding to LTA to continue with investment in inspection and road safety equipment.
- (4) LTA should strengthen road safety programmes and have wider public awareness campaigns.
- (5) LTA, in consultation with the line Ministry, must fast-track the re-establishment of the National Road Safety Council with adequate funding.
- (6) LTA to thoroughly assess all Public Service Operators before issuing or renewing road contract licences.
- (7) LTA must identify more accident black spots areas to reduce the risk of road accident.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee noted that the LTA's Strategic Priority Areas are aligned with national government priorities and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee looks forward to the implementation and commitment on the recommendations put forward by the Committee.

MR. SPEAKER.- I now open the floor for debate on the motion. I have a list of speakers with me. Each of the speakers is given seven minutes for their intervention.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the Consolidated Review Report on the 2017-2020 Land Transport Authority Annual Reports.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Report states key core findings and recommendations. Speaking of governance and policy framework, we need to create a cross-agency MOU with LTA, Fiji Roads Authority (FRA), Fiji Police Force, Ministry of Environment and the City Councils, to oversee some of these reforms.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in addition to the 12 recommendations, I have a few of my own from observations and community visits and as someone who is driving on the road every day.

- (1) A mandatory vehicle emission testing regime for light and heavy vehicles needs to be implemented to reduce pollution on our roads throughout Fiji. We still see so many vehicles emitting massive carbon pollution on our roads, and we would like to see LTA conducting these tests 24/7 if funding is provided.
- (2) No bribery policy when it comes to inspection of passing of vehicles and getting licences. A mandatory call for integrated training, transparent processes and robust complaint and whistleblower channels. Officers need to be equipped with body cameras during the inspection of vehicles and I am glad the recommendation has been taken up and its implementation is seen within LTA.
- (3) Body-worn cameras, of course, are necessary for frontline enforcement and inspection personnel. Also, when implementing the portable weight checks for heavy vehicles, I think an extra tonne of load has a fine of \$1,000 and there has been cases of where people have received money, taken money but that is for investigation. It also ensures transparency, accountability and safety of our officers as well.

We still see some of these, even the buses that are passed that carry passengers are not even straight and you would see in Lautoka. I do not want to name the companies, but I do not know how these vehicles have been passed and carrying so much passengers. Also hoping for a speedy recovery to those passengers involved in this morning's accident and I believe investigation is on.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to the other point, drug tests on roads, we need a mandatory drug impairment testing for drivers on roads or at point of inspection. Establish approval testing methods, oral fluid, saliva or blood with certified devices, defined thresholds, chain of custody rules and testing protocols is required.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the FRA report was spoken on just moments ago. Indeed, FRA needs to be aligned with their standards for visible signs and road markings. Any standardised speed calming infrastructure is necessary for drivers and passengers' safety.

I was in the West in the weekend and as you pass Nadi Airport and go towards Lautoka, as soon as you pass the 60 zone, there is a hump right there but with the sign of a crossing. It does not have a hump sign and right after that hump is a small pool. Mr. Speaker, just before and after that hump you would see the tyre marks. We are calling for an accident because I am sure during the night or heavy rain, you will not be able to see that hump. One bounce with a heavy tyre pressure, you are going into the drain, you are having more damages. So, that is something for the honourable Minister and his team.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, speaking of portable cameras, the idea is good to reduce speed but road humps is not the only solution for road safety. It is alleged that drivers slam their brakes when they see portable speed cameras, creating possibilities of a fatal crash involving the driver who is behind. The LTA should rightfully put a camera sign before and after these portable cameras. For permanent speed cameras, we need to ensure connectivity and live camera recording, as we have found out that some have been purposefully damaged.

If you look at tinting, heavy tints and dark tints is not allowed but still thousands of vehicles on our roads today have them. Some tint their brake lights and indicator lights. Sometimes these tinted light indicators are not visible on a sunny day, and this is something LTA needs to look into. Speaking of floodlights, because I call them that as I drive a lot at night. Speaking of road safety, Mr. Speaker, Sir, it seems that some vehicles are driving with these floodlights, as one would call them, and it puts the drivers that are coming in the opposite direction at risk. If LTA talks so much about safety, then why is Fiji still allowing businesses to import these heavy tints into the country? Is it so that we can fine the drivers?

Mr. Speaker, speaking of heavy goods vehicle, I think we should place a law where if you are driving a heavy vehicle and you notice five to seven vehicles are trailing behind you, please pull over, let the traffic flow, we need more common sense to prevail on our roads.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, those drivers who driveway beyond their speed limit, example, going at 25 in a 60 zone or 40 in a 80 zone, I think they should be issued a warning ticket. As I have stated before, slow drivers create risky drivers.

Lastly, FRA or LTA, there needs to be some accountability. Who do you blame or seek compensation from when the road is not safe for the driver or the passenger? We need to have a law where, if your vehicle gets damaged on a government road, FRA or LTA should be liable for these damages. Fiji needs durable roads. With the increase of cars, we need to turn our focus from daily repairs and maintenance to creating new lanes and bypasses to reduce traffic congestion and ensure driver and passenger safety.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, today in Fiji, buying a car is like buying a piece of bread. Vehicle insurance should be made compulsory, but then there are some insurance companies that are not easy to deal with when making these claims.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I think the honourable Minister has stated on his *Facebook* page that we need to relook into how these licences are being issued for the new drivers. And for newer senior drivers, LTA should provide separate stickers that go on their vehicles to alert all the other drivers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on that note, our policies must be aligned with the solutions that are practicable, and I thank the hardworking staff at LTA, the Committee for their work, and also support the motion before the House.

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate on the Consolidated Review Report on the 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020 of the Land Transport Authority Annual Reports. It is an old Report, and from the period under review until today, many of the items highlighted have been addressed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on Recommendations 4.1, 4.2, 4.6, 4.7, and 4.12 are all related to funding, and I wish to assure this august House that most have been attended to by the Land Transport Authority through assistance provided by government in the financial year 2024-2025 and 2025-2026.

The LTA's operational budget increased from \$26 million last year to \$29.6 million this fiscal year; an increase of almost \$3.6 million to deliver faster, more efficient and accessible services nationwide. The capital budget stands at \$12.2 million for eight key projects aligned with digitisation, infrastructure, road safety and decentralisation. Sir, \$5.87 million goes to the LTA integrated system, which is a digital leap forward, and \$2.89 million for the continuation of the Labasa Office restoration project, a modern facility improving access and working conditions in the Northern Division.

Around \$6.6 million is to fund the immutable backup service protecting critical public data from cyber-attacks and ensuring services stay online and citizens' information stay secure. Sir, \$340,000 for the portable speed cameras targeting accident-prone hotspots, school zones, and village crossings to save lives through smarter and modern enforcement. A sum of \$304,347 is to support the automatic number plate recognition and surveillance cameras at the inspection lanes, boosting transparency and fair enforcement on roadworthiness.

Sir, \$0.9 million funds an automatic vehicle inspection lane at Valelevu, which speeds up checks, supports emission control, and reduces long queues for thousands of vehicle owners in the Suva area. Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are building a land transport system that prioritises safety, modern, responsive and inclusive, considering the transportation needs of all Fijians, from urban dwellers to the most remote rural residents.

On Recommendation 4.3, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the LTA continues to experience growing demand for vehicle inspection services across Fiji. Our vehicle population has expanded significantly over the past decade, a total of around 240,000 registered vehicles on our roads at this stage. However, inspection capacity has not grown at the same pace. To address this imbalance, LTA is expanding the network of authorised motor vehicle inspection agencies across the country through a controlled outsourcing model, which falls in threefold:

- (1) accessibility and efficiency;
- (2) enhanced compliance; and
- (3) partnership and accountability.

In Findings 3.4 and 4.4, Mr. Speaker, Sir, all PSV operators must maintain a valid QMS certification. This certifies that their fleet adheres to routine maintenance schedules, mechanical checks, and safe protocols that meets LTA's technical standards. It involves steps such as

preventative maintenance culture, a data-driven oversight and enhanced public confidence. Before any PSV licence is renewed, the LTA implements a verification process consisting of technical inspection and QMS certification, operator performance review and safety and comfort evaluation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on Recommendation 4.11 on the identification of accident black spots. Reducing fatalities and serious injuries on our roads remain a key priority for the Government and LTA. To this end, LTA has strengthened its collaboration with the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Roads Authority, and the National Fire Authority to identify and address road accident black spots. A black spot is defined as a location where concentration of crashes occur within a defined period, usually three or more crashes at the same site within 12 months. The identification process involves crash data analysis, joint site assessment, remedial measures, and monitoring and review.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to quickly talk about carnage on our roads as I respond to Findings 3.7 and 3.8. Our biggest challenge today is the attitude and behaviour of drivers on the road. Carnage will continue unless motorists take greater personal responsibility. The Government will continue to strengthen systems to improve road safety, including the installation of cameras, both static and portable, the increase on enforcement activities, road safety campaigns, awareness and education, the introduction of stiffer penalties and drug tests for drivers. However, all can only go to some extent unless drivers commit to safe and responsible behaviour, accidents, injuries and the loss of life will continue.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, speeding remains the greatest cause of fatal road crashes in Fiji. According to LTA, as of 29th October, 2025, 37 out of 62 recorded fatalities were due to speeding. Shockingly, the portable speed cameras that were introduced on 1st September, 2025 until 28th October, 2025 captured a total of 15,000 speed infringements. Between January and September 2025, a total of 217 red lights and speed camera traffic infringement notices were issued. That is the behaviour that I am talking about, and it is a choice.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I appeal to every driver - slow down, respect the road and value life. No system, no camera, no fine can replace the discipline and respect that saves lives. Road safety begins with each of us, because every life lost is one too many. People are dying from poor driver's choices. The choice to drive safely is often ignored in pursuit of speed, the blindness of ego and arrogance. Let us harness the power of our choice. We can choose to drive safely, because when we do, we save lives. All those being said, I support the motion before the House.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the Committee for the Report and the various recommendations that are in the report. I agree with the sentiments expressed by the honourable Assistant Minister.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I will be brief because I think most of the stuff has actually been covered. With respect to this particular Report, it is an old one, and I know quite a few things have already been attended to with respect to this particular Report. However, there are some things that is food for thought for the general public and for those that are wanting some legislation changes, et cetera, because that is what is most important.

I think if there is a statistical finding that needs to come out with respect to how many accidents are caused, how it is actually caused and where the public service vehicle drivers are in, how many public service vehicle drivers are involved in it - these things are actually important to make the assessments for the Attorney- General, obviously to make the necessary amendments and the legislation that needs to come to ensure that we have a safe environment which we ride around in, in terms of motor vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the LTA is responsible for a very large area in Fiji's economy. When you are talking about cars, vehicles, trucks and transportation, et cetera, but there are some glaring things that have been mentioned by the previous speakers that need to be aired, and I think one of the ways to resolve it is, to ensure that they get enough funding to get digitised as quickly as possible.

I will just give you one small example of how it was not digitised and we had problems in terms of corruption, et cetera. If you went to weigh a truck on the weighing station, the actual weighing station is not connected to headquarters, which will bling if it has gone over the actual amount that a truck is supposed to carry. Now what happens then is because it is not connected to headquarters, you are going to leave that space open for someone to basically is for corrupt purposes. That is what can happen. If you have got a fine that says \$1,000, as already mentioned by honourable Sharma, these are the occasions that you are allowing these things to happen. But it is a simple exercise whereby if you go get a vehicle weighed, immediately the scale should ping an amount that someone has gone over the scale and headquarters has it recorded. So why was not this particular person fined is the question that needs to be asked?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, also the laws need to be strengthened with respect to our public service vehicle drivers. Look at what happened this morning. We have a public service vehicle driver who has caused an accident and there are 50 people that are either hospitalised or we are not sure about what actually transpired. We do not know the reasons behind it. Obviously, there is an investigation, but PSV drivers need to be 1,000 percent fault-proof at the end of the day. When you go and get a PSV, you have to make it hard for these people to get it.

You have to make it difficult for them to actually renew it, not for any other purpose, but for safety purposes. A classic example is, on one occasion, I was in a taxi in Singapore and the taxi driver refused to even cross an orange light and when I asked him why he did not, he simply turned around and said, tomorrow morning I will not be a taxi driver anymore because he feared the law. In terms of our public service vehicle drivers, we need to ensure that they fear the law. Right now, there is a lot that can be done, but it can only be done if we strengthen the laws and assist the LTA. The LTA also is an institution that gives a lot of funding back to the Ministry of Finance for consolidated funds in terms of fines, et cetera. All of that is good.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other thing is that we have to be very practical when we do these things also. If you see the new road at Nasese that a lot of people use, a lot of motorcyclists use, a lot of people who walk et cetera, there are trucks that weigh hundreds of tonnes that are actually flying down that road. Now, the humps will not fix the problem but at the end of the day, if you put cameras up there, you will get them, you will start collecting revenue from it. Even the humps that are put there, they are not actually regulated. These are small things, but it is important for us to realise that it needs to be looked at carefully.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the road safety programmes and the public awareness campaigns had taken a dive. I also know that some of the fuel companies are quite actively involved in ensuring road safety awareness is done, and that needs to be re-established or re-looked at in terms of how much more can be done, or maybe we need to tap into their source of revenue to say X percentage goes towards road safety.

With respect to the Quality Assurance Monitoring System (QAMS) that was spoken about, these are vehicles that get monitored through the system that support our general public. They need to be at all times, make sure that these are operational and safe for any public member to be riding around in. I will even go so far as talking about our PSV operators who actually drive these buses. Their safety is another thing that needs to be looked at. It is not just about the passenger, it is also about the driver.

We have seen on recent occasions through social media, et cetera, drivers have been attacked, and these things that the laws need to be looked at in terms of people who actually do that. It can cause accidents to more than one person, not just the driver at the end of the day. Those are just simple things that can be looked at.

I am grateful to the Committee for coming up with this particular Report. As honourable Assistant Minister Tuinaceva has pointed out, Sir, most of these things have actually been attended to by LTA. All in all, I think the LTA will require the support of the whole House and the general public in Fiji to ensure that we have good road safety programmes and LTA making sure that the roads are safe for everyone to ride around.

HON. A. BIA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, thank you for the opportunity to speak on the motion that is before Parliament - the Consolidated Report of LTA. I will be very brief, given that the honourable Members who have spoken before me have shared a lot of issues on the Report. I also share the same sentiments as the honourable Assistant Minister responsible about the attitude of drivers. I do support him in that statement knowing that a lot of accidents that do happen on our roads, it all comes down to the decision and the attitude of drivers on the road.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am also a Member of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs that scrutinised the current LTA Report that is before Parliament. In visiting the various LTA offices in Fiji, one common thing from the management of LTA and the various divisions around the country is the issue of budgetary constraints. If you look at the recommendations presented by the Committee, nearly four or five of those recommendations are about the limited budget that they work with on a yearly basis.

One of the key issues that was raised while visiting LTA offices is the limited government funding and the reduction in disbursement impacted project implementation and service delivery. Also, if we take a look at the annual reports before us, LTA directed a lot of expenditure towards technology-driven enforcement, service decentralisation and digitisation of customer and licencing services. So, three key challenges, apart from the one that is in the Report was also shared by the management team.

I would just like to remind honourable Koya and honourable Rinesh Sharma that a lot of their operational demands were not met because of the budget allocated to them. So, these are not issues that happen overnight, these are legacy issues that have happened over the years and I am thankful to the current board and management at LTA for working hard to bring about many reforms to try and improve the service delivery to the people.

The three main key challenges that were also presented were the:

- (1) revenue decline which was due to COVID-19 and the rising operational cost;
- (2) increased cost in maintaining the ageing infrastructure as shared by honourable Koya; and
- (3) improvement of the Inspection Bay at Valelevu.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I support the Report before the House.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee noted the positive contributions of the honourable Members during the debate on the Consolidated Review Report on the 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Land Transport Authority Annual Reports.

I take this opportunity to thank the Board members, the Executive Management and staff of LTA for their commitment, dedication and unwavering support which have been instrumental to the

successful operation of LTA. I humbly request LTA and the Ministry of Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport for the successful implementation of the recommendations put forward by the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity and I fully support this motion before the House.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of today's sitting. I wish you a very good evening and Parliament will now adjourn until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 5.30 p.m.

ANNEXURE I

Reply to Written Question No. 204/2025 tabled by the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Service, Public Enterprises, Trade, Co-operative, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications (Ref. Page 2097)



PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CIVIL SERVICE, PUBLIC ENTERPRISES, TRADE, CO-OPERATIVE, MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES AND COMMUNICATIONS
(Hon. S.L. Rabuka)

Reply to Question No. 204/2025 is as follows:

- 1.0 The Civil Service Discipline requires that a Permanent Secretary may suspend an employee at any stage during the disciplinary process if it is determined that:
 - i. the presence of the employee could compromise safety in the workplace;
 - ii. the presence of the employee could compromise or hinder the investigation; and
 - iii. if there are concerns about the preservation or integrity of Ministry information, property or service to the public.
- 2.0 Officers on any period of suspension while the matter is under investigation by the Ministry will still be on **FULL pay**.
- 3.0 Should the decision be made to institute Disciplinary Action, then any suspension will initially be on **NO pay** from the date the case is referred to the Public Service Disciplinary Tribunal (PSDT).
- 4.0 It is critical to note that not all cases require termination thus officers after investigations are issued with warnings and their suspensions lifted. In cases referred to PSDT, the PSDT decides on the course of action.
- 5.0 For the 2023 - 2025 period, a **total of 47 civil servants across 13 Ministries** were on suspension with pay. This is made up of:
 - i. 8 civil servants across five (5) Ministries in 2023,
 - ii. 17 civil servants across 8 Ministries in 2024; and
 - iii. 22 civil servants across six (6) Ministries in 2025.
- 6.0 In terms of total costs to Government related to paid salary:
 - i. \$153,227.58 was paid in 2023,
 - ii. \$ 428,092.84 in 2024; and
 - iii. \$429,841.63 in 2025.

ANNEXURE II

Reply to Written Question No. 205/2025 tabled by the honourable Minister for Agriculture and Waterways (Ref. Page 2097)



MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND WATERWAYS
(Hon. T.N. Tunabuna)

Reply to Question No. 205/2025 is as follows:

The Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways remains committed to enhancing rural infrastructure to support the growth and sustainability of Fiji's agricultural sector. One of the key initiatives under this commitment is the construction of farm roads, which is implemented through the Ministry's "**Farm Access Program**".

The construction of farm roads is driven by several critical objectives:

- **Enhancing market connectivity:** - many farmers in isolated regions face significant challenges in transporting their produce to markets. These roads provide vital links that reduce travel time and costs, enabling farmers to sell their goods more efficiently.
- **Encouraging farm expansion:** - improved access allows farmers to utilise previously unreachable land, promoting larger-scale farming and diversification of crops.
- **Boosting food security and income generation:** - by facilitating better access to inputs and markets, farm roads contribute to a more resilient and productive agricultural system, especially in rural and maritime communities.

The impact of these farm roads is transformative:

- **Improved livelihoods:** - farmers can now transport produce more reliably, increasing their income and reducing post-harvest losses.
- **Community development:** - better infrastructure fosters economic activity, encourages youth participation in agriculture, and strengthens community resilience.
- **Social inclusion:** - the initiative ensures that even the most remote communities are not left behind, aligning with the government's broader goals of equitable development.
- **Increase volume of agricultural production:** - farm roads significantly boost agricultural production by improving access to markets, reducing transportation costs, and enabling timely delivery of inputs and harvests.

A total of **73 farm roads** have been constructed from **2023 to date** (*Annex 1*), reflecting the Ministry's continued commitment to improving rural infrastructure and supporting agricultural development.

During the **2023-2024 financial year:**

- **11 farm roads** have been successfully constructed across the Central Division, covering a combined distance of **16.3 kilometres**. This has directly benefited **314 households**.
- **14 farm roads** have been successfully constructed across the Western Division, covering a combined distance of **35.5 kilometres**, benefiting **1,030 households**.
- **2 farm roads** were successfully constructed in the Northern Division, covering a combined distance of **10.5 kilometres**, benefiting **105 households**.

- **3 farm roads** were successfully constructed in the Eastern Division, covering a combined distance of **67 kilometres**, benefiting **118 households**.

In the **2024-2025 financial year**:

- **25 farm roads** have been successfully constructed across the Central Division, covering a combined distance of **45.9 kilometres**, benefiting **405 households**.
- **11 farm roads** have been successfully constructed across the Western Division, covering a combined distance of **47.5 kilometres**, benefiting **433 households**.
- **3 farm roads** have been successfully constructed across the Northern Division, covering a combined distance of **9.5 kilometres**, benefiting **109 households**.
- **4 farm roads** have been successfully constructed across the Eastern Division, covering a combined distance of **8.9 kilometres**, benefitting **121 households**.

These developments represent a strategic investment in enhancing access to farms, facilitating transportation of produce, and strengthening the agricultural sector across all regions.

A total of **thirteen (13) farm roads** are scheduled for construction during the **2025-2026 financial year**. Of these:

- 7 farm roads will be developed in the Central Division;
- 4 in the Western Division;
- 1 in the Northern Division; and
- 1 in the Eastern Division.

Although the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways has demonstrated commendable commitment to supporting rural farmers through the construction of farm roads, several persistent challenges threaten the timely and effective implementation of this initiative:

- The lengthy tender process often delays the commencement of projects, pushing construction timelines beyond optimal periods.
- Compounding this issue is the financial year, which begins in August, resulting in actual roadwork starting around November - coinciding with the rainy season, when construction becomes more difficult and costly.
- Additionally, service providers are frequently contracted by multiple ministries within the same financial year, leading to resource strain and scheduling conflicts.

These hurdles are further exacerbated by limited budget allocations, which restrict the scope and quality of road development, ultimately impacting farmers' access to market and essential services.

In conclusion, the construction of farm roads under the Farm Access Program is a cornerstone of the Ministry of Agriculture and Waterways development strategy. It reflects the Ministry's unwavering commitment to empowering farmers, enhancing food security, and building a prosperous Fiji.