

# **PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI**



## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

### **DAILY HANSARD**

**MONDAY, 27TH APRIL, 2026**

**[CORRECTED COPY]**



**MONDAY, 27TH APRIL, 2026**

The Parliament met at 9.43 a.m. pursuant to notice.

MR. SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

**PRESENT**

Hon. Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Service and 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. Filimoni Wainiqolo Rasokisoki Vosarogo, Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources

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 Radrodru, Minister for Education

Hon. Charan Jeath Singh, Minister for Public Enterprise and Multi-Ethnic Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Arts

Hon. Tomasi Niuvotu Tunabuna, Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar Industry

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

Hon. Sakiasi Raisevu Ditoka, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade

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 and Environment and Climate Change

Hon. Ifereimi Vasu, Minister for iTaukei Affairs

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

Hon. Mosese Drecala Bilitavu, Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management

Hon. Sakiusa Tubuna, Assistant Minister for 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 Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport

Hon. Penioni Koliniwai Ravunawa, Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services

Hon. Inosi Kuridrani, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Waterways

Hon. Sachida Nand, Assistant Minister for Commerce and Business Development

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. Faiyaz Siddiq Koya  
 Hon. Semi Tuleca Koroilavesau  
 Hon. Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj  
 Hon. Parveen Kumar Bala  
 Hon. Hem Chand  
 Hon. Joseph Nitya Nand  
 Hon. Vijay Nath  
 Hon. Rinesh Ritesh Sharma  
 Hon. Virendra Lal  
 Hon. Ketan Kirit Lal

Absent

Hon. Esrom Yosef Immanuel, Minister for Finance, Commerce and Business Development.  
 Hon. Viam Pillay  
 Hon. Sanjay S. Kirpal

**MOMENT OF SILENCE – LATE RATU EPELI NAILATIKAU**

Honourable Members, before we continue, if I can be allowed to refer back to the occasion of the nation’s mourning of the late *Turaga na i Taukei Naisogolaca*.

I first personally thank the honourable Deputy Speaker, honourable Qereqeretabua, for leading the Parliament’s *reguregu* and to the honourable Members from both sides of the House for forming with the Parliament Secretariat, the official delegation representing this People’s Parliament. My deepest appreciation. Thank you and *vinaka vakalevu*.

Everyone has a story to tell for the *Turaga na i Taukei Naisogolaca*. I air my own reflection, if only as a footnote to all the eloquent speeches and eulogies delivered and spoken of a truly remarkable life, dedicated to the service of his people and to our nation.

I was, in 1996, appointed by the then government of the present Prime Minister to succeed Ratu Epeli Nailatikau in London as Fiji’s High Commissioner to the Court of St James. As our paths were to cross in New York, we took the opportunity for the handing over to be at the official residence at Dodds Ferry of the then resident of the Fiji Permanent Representative of the United Nations, Ratu Jone Filipe Radrodro. An enjoyable evening it turned out to be, and with the formal part of our way out first, we broke into casual talks and spiced by the use of banter typical of the *Turaga na i Taukei Naisogolaca*.

One of my first courtesy calls after presenting my credentials to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace, was to the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Office. After the use of formalities and later over a cup of tea, the Under-Secretary casually posed the question, “Do you, by any chance, indulge in a bit of flutter?” I paused and looked perplexed across for help from my Deputy Counsellor Sang Kangwai, who was also somewhat at a loss, until the

Under-Secretary cleared the air by adding, “You know, small bet on the horses?” So, I politely responded by saying, “I am sorry, no.” The typical English reaction of regretful, “oh”, meant more than a full sentence can say, and I soon learnt that my predecessor *Na i Taukei Naisogolaca*, was a favourite and preferred tipster in horse racing on a regular basis for the staff members of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.

I truly knew then that I had enormous shoes to fill, even in this Chair, I know, in the words of the poet Robert Frost, “I have miles to go before I sleep.” Rest in peace, Ratu.

May I invite the honourable Members to stand and observe a moment of silence in his honour.

(Honourable Members observed a minute of silence)

### MINUTES

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

That the Minutes of the sittings of Parliament held on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2026 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

### COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPEAKER

#### Welcome

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

Honourable Members, please, join me in welcoming some PL100 students from the University of the South Pacific. Welcome to your Parliament. I hope that today's proceedings will provide some insight and enlightenment on the workings of Parliament as one of the three arms of the State.

#### Clarification - Independent Members and Political Party Roles

For the information of honourable Members, the Office of the Speaker received correspondence from the honourable Jone Usamate seeking clarification on the effect of the Political Parties (Registration, Conduct, Funding and Disclosures) Act of 2013 in relation to Independent Members of Parliament assuming positions as office holders in recently registered political parties.

Honourable Members, following careful consideration of the Constitution and relevant provisions of the Act, it has been clarified that there are no provisions prohibiting Independent Members from assuming such positions whilst remaining Independent Members in Parliament. Independent Members, as representatives not affiliated to any existing political party are entitled to exercise their political freedoms, including participating in discussions and initiatives surrounding the formation of new political parties.

Furthermore, honourable Members, the Standing Orders of the Parliament of the Republic of Fiji do not provide any explicit restrictions in this regard. In the absence of any parliamentary rule, constitutional or legal limitation, Independent Members may proceed with their political engagements, provided they continue to adhere to the principles of parliamentary decorum and ethical conduct as expected of all Members.

Honourable Members, the Office of the Speaker will continue to recognise such Members as Independent Members of Parliament and not as Members of the newly or recently registered political parties for the remainder of this parliamentary term.

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

The following Reports were tabled by the honourable Ministers 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

- (1) Consumer Council of Fiji Annual Report 2020-2021 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 144 of 2026*)
- (2) Ministry of Infrastructure and Meteorological Services Annual Report 2019-2020 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 163 of 2025*)
- (3) Ministry of Infrastructure and Meteorological Services Annual Report 2020-2021 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 164 of 2025*)
- (4) Ministry of Infrastructure and Meteorological Services Annual Report 2021-2022 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 165 of 2025*)
- (5) Ministry of Infrastructure and Meteorological Services Annual Report 2022-2023 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 166 of 2025*)
- (6) Ministry of Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport Annual Reports 2023 to 2024 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 167 of 2025*)
- (7) Fiji Public Trustee Corporation Pte Ltd Annual Report 2021 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 3 of 2023*)
- (8) Fiji Public Trustee Corporation Pte Ltd Annual Report 2022 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 95 of 2023*)
- (9) Fiji Public Trustee Corporation Pte Ltd Annual Report 2023 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 75 of 2024*)

#### Standing Committee on Economic Affairs

- (1) Fiji Development Bank Annual Report 2025 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 22 of 2026*)
- (2) Investment Fiji Annual Report 2022-2023 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 22 of 2024*)
- (3) Investment Fiji Annual Report 2023-2024 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 124 of 2024*)
- (4) Ministry of Sugar Industry Annual Report 2021-2022 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 170 of 2024*)

#### Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

- (1) Fiji Police Force Annual Report 2021-2022 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 16 of 2023*)
- (2) Sugarcane Growers Fund Annual Report 2024 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 160 of 2025*)
- (3) Sugar Industry Tribunal Annual Report 2021 (*Parliamentary Paper No. 26 of 2026*)

Honourable Members, please, take note that the following Reports are for information only

and will not be referred to any Standing Committee:

- (1) First Quarter Appropriation Statement, Actual Expenditure from 1st August, 2025 to 30th October, 2025.
- (2) Mid-Year Fiscal Statement, Actual Expenditure 1st August, 2025 to 31st January, 2026
- (3) Third Quarter Appropriation Statement Actual Expenditure from 1st February, 2025 to 30th April, 2025.
- (4) Fourth Quarter Appropriation Statement, Actual Expenditure from 1st May, 2025 to 31st July, 2025.

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

MR. SPEAKER.- The following Ministers have given notice to make Ministerial Statements under Standing Order 40:

- (1) Minister for Information and Environment and Climate Change;
- (2) Minister for Fisheries and Forestry; and
- (3) Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection.

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

#### Update on the Proposed Waste-To-Energy and Private Port Development at Vuda Point

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, honourable Deputy Prime Minister, honourable Ministers, honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen in the gallery, and to all our viewers watching from home on television and online; I rise today to provide an update to this august House on the proposed Waste-to-Energy and Private Port Development by TNG Pte Limited at Vuda Point, and to outline the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process that is currently underway.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this project has attracted significant national attention, as developments of this scale and nature rightly should. Public interest, scrutiny, and engagement are essential to good governance. They strengthen decision-making and ensure that outcomes reflect both national priorities and community concerns. At the same time, it is important that our national conversation is grounded in a clear understanding of the process, the law, and where we currently stand.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister for Environment and Climate Change, I cannot and will not prejudge the outcome of this application. The assessment process is still underway. No decision has been made. Let me repeat that, no decision has been made. My purpose today is to place the facts on record, to explain the process as it stands and to assure this House and the people of Fiji that the final determination will be made in accordance with the law, guided by evidence and informed by consultation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in any functioning democracy, Ministers will meet with investors, landowners, community leaders and stakeholders; that is governance. These engagements allow proposals to be presented, concerns to be raised, and information to be shared. However, it is important to be clear; a meeting is not a decision, a proposal is not a permit, a discussion is not an approval. Under Fiji's legal framework, the authority to assess and determine Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) is anchored in a statutory process established under the Environment Management Act 2005 and its regulations. That framework exists to ensure independence,

transparency and technical integrity.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me now outline the process. The EIA screening application was submitted on 10th September, 2025. On 25th September, 2025, the Director of Environment determined that a full Environmental Impact Assessment was required, reflecting the scale and potential impact of the proposed development. Following this, the Department commenced the scoping phase, including mandatory site inspections to assess environmental conditions and identify risks. From this work, the terms of reference was issued on 28th November, 2025. These terms of reference define what must be studied, what risks must be assessed, and what level of consultation is required. They are the blueprint of the entire assessment. The EIA report, prepared by accredited specialists was then submitted on 18th March, 2026.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the report entered public review from 23rd March to 22nd April, 2026. Access was provided across multiple locations. When concerns were raised about accessibility, additional arrangements were made, including extended viewing hours at First Landing Beach Resort until 11 p.m. daily. This reflects a simple principle: participation should not just be allowed; it should be facilitated.

The public response has been significant. Sir, 875 written submissions were received, over 5,600 online petition signatures, and over 3,100 paper-based signatures. Public consultations were also held in Viseisei, Naikorokoro and Wairabetia. These figures demonstrate one thing clearly; the process is active, accessible and being utilised by the people of Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are now at the technical review stage. No decision has been made. The Technical Review Committee will assess the report, all submissions, and all issues raised. Where necessary, further studies or clarifications may be required. When this process is complete, the Director of Environment will make a determination to approve with or without conditions, or to reject the application. That decision will be guided by law and evidence, and it is subject to appeal.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to take a moment to recognise the role of the public officers within the Department of Environment. These are professionals operating within the law, applying technical expertise and ensuring that every step of the process is conducted properly. In this case, they have:

- (1) Conducted site inspections;
- (2) Developed the terms of reference;
- (3) Facilitated public access and participation;
- (4) Received and recorded submissions; and
- (5) Progressed the process to technical review.

That is their duty, and they have carried it out.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is also important to acknowledge that in recent weeks some of these public offices have been the subject of public commentary that has at times been personal in nature. In a democracy, scrutiny is welcome. People have every right to question projects, raise concerns and engage in public debate. There is a difference, Mr. Speaker, between scrutiny of a process and personal criticism of individuals. Public officers must be accountable, yes, but they must also be treated with fairness and respect. They serve the people of Fiji, and they apply the law of Fiji, and they must be allowed the space to do so without undue pressure or personal attack.

Strong institutions depend not only on laws but on trust. They also depend on allowing those entrusted with responsibility to carry out their duties professionally. Our officers are guided by the law, not by noise. To those who support this project, your views are part of the process. To those

who oppose it, your views are part of the process. What no one is entitled to is a predetermined outcome. What everyone is entitled to, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is a fair, transparent and lawful process.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I have mentioned, the process has been followed step by step and the decision will follow. I wish to conclude with this assurance to the people of Fiji, especially to the people of Vuda. There will be no political interference or there will be no predetermined outcome. The decision will be guided by law, informed by evidence and shaped by consultation. That is how we need to protect the integrity of our environmental governance and that is what this Government remains committed to upholding.

MR. SPEAKER.- Before I invite the honourable Leader of the Opposition or his designate to respond, honourable Members, I recognise in the gallery the *Marama Bale na Roko Tui Dreketi*, Ro Teimumu Kepa, joining us this morning. Madam, on behalf of all the Members, you are most welcome to Parliament this morning.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for outlining the EIA process. I want to say to the honourable Minister that our nation's sovereignty is not on sale. The proposed Vuda-Saweni waste-to-energy incinerator is not an investment in Fiji's future - it is an indictment of our Government's failure to protect it. Can the honourable Minister confirm whether the Government conducted any due diligence on this project considering the proponent's track record? This project should not even have gone into the EIA process.

HON. C.J. SINGH.- Why?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- It should have been rejected at the outset, and I will tell you why.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- The project was rejected in Australia, rejected after seven years and rejected by one of the world's rigorous planning systems because it posed unacceptable risk to air quality, water quality and human health. Now, those same risks are being planned to be shipped to our shores, to a sacred first landing, to our fishing waters of Vuda and to the lungs of our children. Even our own diplomat gave a scathing report on this project. Those of us who have studied science know about dioxins, furans and other carcinogenic substances that can cause cancer, respiratory diseases, miscarriage and many other health-related issues. So, the question is whether any scientific data was given to the people of Fiji during the EIA process?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, what is of concern is, even before the EIA could be concluded, the honourable Prime Minister made the statement that he supports the project. Is it another love affair with the billionaire or will it be a Fukushima case where the honourable Prime Minister behind our backs goes and support the dumping of nuclear waste in the Pacific despite Parliament supporting the motion?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- A Point of Order, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- ...reminding the honourable Member to be relevant, please.

HON. OPPOSITION MEMBERS.- What number?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Standing Order 60.

MR. SPEAKER.- Standing Order 60 is a general provision. Specifically, honourable Minister?

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, on relevance, I think it has been quoted a few times in Parliament.

MR. SPEAKER.- Go on, honourable Minister.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, my apologies. I do not have the copy of my Standing Orders before me, but the honourable Members know that the issue of relevance is always being raised by them as well. It is Standing Order 61.

MR. SPEAKER.- You are quite correct.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reference to Fukushima is not relevant in this discussion, and may I also remind the honourable Member, she had the opportunity to participate in the public consultations which have now closed, and it is not part of the EIA process now.

MR. SPEAKER.- I take the point from the honourable Minister. Can you confine your comments on the Vuda issue?

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because the water can also go to Vuda and I am talking about environment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, what does it say about this Government that a project deemed too dangerous for a Western Sydney Suburb is deemed acceptable for Fiji? It says that our regulatory systems are weak, our institutions are vulnerable to commercial pressure and that somewhere in the machinery of power the wellbeing of ordinary Fijians rank below the interest of a foreign investor. The numbers alone are of concern. Fiji produces a fraction of the waste this facility will burn. The rest 150 tonnes daily would be imported from Australia, New Zealand and other Pacific Island countries.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are not being offered an energy solution. We are being offered a contract to become the Pacific's rubbish bin, both Basel and Waigani Conventions, ban the importation of hazardous waste into forum island countries. The Australian Hazardous Act classifies unsorted household rubbish as hazardous. Now, did due diligence take into consideration all these issues before even going to the EIA stage? This project must answer one simple question. The question is, if this project cannot meet Australian standard, why should Fijian lives be worth less?

The custodians of Viseisei have said no, the tourism industry has said no, even the honourable Minister for Tourism has said no. Landowners and tens and thousands of citizens have said no. When a government moves forward despite the chorus of opposition, it is not governing and this is where the concern is.

MR. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Mr. Speaker, it is again under the same Standing Order – Standing Order 61.

The honourable Member is speaking to the substance of the EIA which if she was not in Parliament, she is actually breaching the law because it has gone through public consultation, it is now in the technical review stage where none of us should really speak on it and let the process takes its course. What she is alluding to is saying we have already made a decision, when that is the real

purpose of an EIA, is to see whether it should happen or not. It has not happened, but she is alluding to, the Government being irresponsible for decision that has not been made. She has to withdraw that.

MR. SPEAKER.- There is no finding yet. So, you are pre-empting the finding? You are not? But you are making supposition on what may come out of the recommendations. Can you just realign your argument so that it falls into the finding?

There is no finding yet, so are you pre-empting the finding? You are not? But you are making supposition on what may come out of the recommendations? Can you realign your arguments so that they fall into the ....

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Thank you, Sir. That is not what I am insinuating; nothing of that.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- For the honourable Minister's information, I have worked in the Department of Environment for 12 years, and I know the EIA process very much. What I was trying to say is, why did due diligence not supersede the EIA process? In other words, they have said yes to the investor and now let us go through the EIA process. That is of concern because we are wasting our resources, we are wasting our time, and we are just making everyone so upset about this project.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Kumar, I take your intervention as a word of caution to the process.

#### Advancing Fiji's Offshore Fisheries Sector - Innovation, Sustainability and Value Creation

HON. A.V.B.C. BAINIVALU.- Mr. Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, *Marama Bale na Roko Tui Dreketi*, honourable Cabinet Ministers and Assistant Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, and viewers tuning in live on this live broadcast - *ni sa yadra vinaka*.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update this House on the transformative developments through innovation, sustainability and value creation within Fiji's offshore fisheries sector. The Coalition Government is moving beyond rhetoric to deliver tangible, robust and innovative solutions to the challenges facing this vital sector. On regional developments and the South Pacific albacore, we have long recognised that fish do not respect national borders. Therefore, our prosperity lies on regional solidarity.

I am pleased to report a monumental achievement from the 22nd Regular Session of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) held in Manila in December 2025. For over 20 years, the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) has advocated for a harvest strategy for South Pacific albacore that protects our economic interests while ensuring stock sustainability. I can confirm that the Commission has formally adopted a management procedure for South Pacific albacore. That is not just a technical bureaucratic win, Mr. Speaker, it is a lifeline for our domestic longline fleet.

This management procedure moves us away from reactive, *ad hoc* measures, to a pre-agreed science-based framework. It automates catch limits that respond to the health of the stock, ensuring that South Pacific albacore, the blue gold of our domestic industry, is managed to enhance the biological status of stocks and economic viability for Fijian fishers.

Mr. Speaker, Fiji remains firm in protecting our rights and advancing our interests in this

important fishery. As future allocation arrangements and implementation of the management procedure are developed, Fiji will strongly advocate for a fair and equitable share that recognises the rights of coastal states whose waters support the resource and the need for developing Pacific Island countries to secure greater benefits from our fisheries' resources.

Mr. Speaker, Fiji will continue to emphasise the importance of the tuna fishery for employment, economic growth, food security and national revenue, together with the investments we have made in our domestic fleet processing sector, port infrastructure, monitoring systems and responsible fisheries management. This victory, Mr. Speaker, stands as a testament to Fiji's leadership within WCPFC and the FFA and our unwavering commitment to the zone-based management approach that recognises the sovereign rights of Pacific nations.

Mr. Speaker, on the digital transformation of our fisheries, we are aggressively retiring the archaic paper-based systems of the past. The error of filling up logbooks by hand with data, taking months to process is ending. The Ministry of Fisheries had successfully rolled out the Catch Accountancy System (CAS). This web-based platform digitises the entire supply chain from the moment a fish is caught to when it is exported. It streamlines the issuance of landing and export permits, reducing process time from days to hours, and ensures that every dollar of value is accounted for.

In the coming months, Mr. Speaker, Sir, through the support of the Forum Fisheries Agency, more developments to this work will be realised with the development of e-licensing registration and export of coastal commodities. These developments will ensure that we continue to progress and utilise advanced technologies in our collective efforts towards better service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, we are transitioning our electronic monitoring system from donor funded trials to a fully sustainable, state-led programme. On 9<sup>th</sup> March this year, the Ministry of Fisheries reinforced this commitment through deepened cooperation with the Fiji Fishing Industry Association. Under the state-led funding, installations for 20 vessels have begun with analysis of video expected to commence from next week following the arrival of the first batch of vessels. Additionally, we are equipping our longline fleet with onboard cameras and sensors that provide the eyes we need at sea, where human observers cannot always go. To cushion the high cost of operations, the Ministry has also assessed the viability of service providers in Australia and New Zealand. The goal is to identify service providers that can assist in software developments that meet the minimum data standards needed in the assessment of catch data to assist in the region's stock assessment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the digital data feeds directly into the new National Fisheries Surveillance Centre, which we inaugurated in April 2005 at the Offshore Fisheries Centre in Walu Bay. Equipped with real time satellite tracking and integrated data feeds, this Centre, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is our shield against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, ensuring that those who steal from our waters are caught and penalised.

Mr. Speaker, regarding value adding and market access, for too long we have focussed only on the volume of fish we catch. It is time we focus on the value we create. The Ministry of Fisheries is actively exploring niche products to unlock new revenue streams from what was previously discarded as waste. On fish waste trials, we are currently supporting trials that utilise fish skins, bones and offal. We are seeing promising results in converting fish skin into high grade medical collagen for skin grafts and wound healing are marked with immense global potential.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, for fertiliser and feed, we are scaling up the production of organic liquid fertilisers and animal feed from fish processing by-products. This not only creates a circular economy in reducing pollution in our landfills and harbour but also provides cheaper organic inputs

for our agricultural sector. By turning trash into cash, we are diversifying the income of our fishing companies and buffering them against the volatility of global tuna prices.

On the vital support of the Forum Fisheries Agency, I must acknowledge their instrumental role in advancing our economic aspirations through Enhancing National Benefits Initiative (ENBI). The agency is currently assisting Fiji in conducting robust value chain analysis to identify specific gaps where domestic revenue is being lost.

Mr. Speaker, in April of this year, the Forum Fisheries Agency formalised a new partnership with the Iceland Ocean Cluster. This collaboration is directly supporting our 100 percent fish strategy by providing technical expertise needed to turn fish waste into commercial products. By leveraging the FFA's Economic Development Unit, we are not only assessing our economic needs with great acquisition but actively matching these needs with investors who are ready to fund our transition from a raw exporter to a premium processing hub.

Mr. Speaker, on marine spatial planning, our commitment to the 30x30 target protecting 30 percent of our ocean by 2030 is unwavering, but it must be done right. It must be based on science and not just sentiment. Earlier this year, I had the privilege of opening a meeting of the 30x30 Data Working Group. This technical body is currently collating the best available scientific data to identify areas of high biodiversity that require additional management consideration or protection while simultaneously mapping out our key fishing grounds to minimise economic displacement.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that these decisions are inclusive, we have operationalised the Offshore Fisheries Advisory Council. This body brings together government, industry and civil society to provide balanced advice to the Minister. It ensures that our marine spatial planning integrates seamlessly with our fisheries management plans, existing international and regional obligations and frameworks rather than creating conflict.

Mr. Speaker, Fiji is no longer a passive observer in the management of its ocean. Through the adoption of the Albacore Management Procedure, the digitisation of monitoring system and our bold steps into value-added processing, we are building a fisheries sector that is resilient, profitable and sustainable. We remain committed to using these innovative, tangible and robust approaches to address our challenges, ensuring that Fiji's fishery remains a pillar of our national prosperity for generations to come.

HON. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Minister for Fisheries for her Statement this morning. Before I go on to my reply to the Ministerial Statement this morning, I would just like to report to your high office that the control valve that you had identified on Friday during our Business Committee has now been fixed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Minister has highlighted the advancement in Fiji's Offshore Fisheries Sector and she highlighted three issues:

- (1) new science-based framework to automate catch limits;
- (2) offshore fisheries transitioning to digital catch accountancy; and
- (3) new initiative of processing waste into high-value medical collagen.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the Ministry had opened this operation centre in 2025 and has since developed the centre and also integrates BMS, AIS satellite imagery, electronic reporting, electronic monitoring into a single live visualisation platform. I understand also that they have been using the traceable solutions which is working with the Ministry to digitise vessels, boarding inspections, and a catch accountancy system.

I thank the honourable Minister for the detailed explanations that she had made to Parliament this morning and I am certain that this will assist Fiji in its catch research and also increasing capacity to be able to generate more income going forward. The technology news, I understand that she had covered and fisheries has been helped by Australia, New Zealand, France, USA and FFA. I think one of the key challenges would be the data silos between agencies and resistance to data sharing across the sector. I think the honourable Minister understands the competitions, not only within the Pacific but in the worldwide tuna fisheries.

The Operation Centre, as I had alluded to, was opened in April 2025. A few other questions I would like to ask the honourable Minister, if she has made a massive reduction in IUU incidents since the Centre opened? Is the catch accountancy system now fully operational or is it still in development? Is the 40 percent reduction target by 2027 on track? How many prosecutions have resulted from the Centre intelligence since it opened?

By-products, I think, this has been a learning curve, not only for Fiji, but the tuna fisheries sector in the Pacific. I was in Iceland and Norway, where they had highlighted that tuna skin is one of the best grafting materials that is being used by the American Forces during the war, which they were researching. They had said that they will come to Fiji to carry out more research where tuna skin is used to graft injuries in the fighting scenes.

The honourable Minister has highlighted various uses of tuna by-products. It turns waste into a secondary revenue stream without increasing catch volume and is a vital circular economic strategy. The applications span to food, medicine, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and agriculture. These are the opportunities available to Fiji and our neighbours within the Pacific region.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, this is a convenient time to suspend our proceedings for our morning break. Parliament will resume in half an hour.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.37 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.16 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, before we call on our last Ministerial Statement, I ask you to, please, join me in welcoming the second group of PL100 students from the University of South Pacific.

Welcome to your Parliament. I hope that today's proceedings will provide you with the same insight that your first group had on the workings of our Parliament, as one of the three arms of the State.

### Fiji's SCORE Index Assessment Findings

HON. S. KIRAN.- Mr. Speaker, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers, honourable Members of Parliament, and to all those watching and listening across our nation and abroad; *ni sa yadra vinaka*, *namaste*, *aslaam walekum* and a very good morning.

Mr. Speaker, today, I present the findings of the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index Assessment for Fiji to this august House. This comprehensive assessment provides vital insights into the state of Fiji's social fabric, with direct implications for our governance, social cohesion, and national development strategies.

Fiji is a diverse, resilient and deeply interconnected society. Our history encompasses periods of political upheaval, constitutional transformation and social strain, as well as remarkable endurance, healing and growth, despite polarising political narratives and intergenerational stereotyping.

The Coalition Government recognises the importance of moving beyond anecdotes and assumptions and is committed to shaping our policies and programmes using credible, nationally representative evidence that reflects the reality of our people.

It was in this spirit, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Government partnered with the United Nations to launch the Social Cohesion programme funded through the United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). Under the Programme, UNDP and its partners, with Government support, implemented the SCORE Index Assessment. The assessment sought to provide a rigorous evidence-based understanding of how people across Fiji experience and perceive trust, inclusion, service delivery, human rights and national identity, and how they view the capacity of our institutions and communities to address differences peacefully.

The assessment was undertaken in late 2025 through a collaborative partnership between the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD), an international organisation with global expertise in evidence-based social cohesion analysis, and the Fiji National University (FNU). The assessment combined SeeD's internationally recognised SCORE methodology with FNU's contextual knowledge and local research capacity, ensuring both methodological rigour and strong relevance to the national and community context across Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, the SCORE Assessment measures perceptions and attitudes. It captures how people perceive and feel about trust, inclusion, leadership, democracy and coexistence across ethnicities, provinces, gender and age groups, education levels, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Fiji SCORE assessment focused on three social cohesion dimensions:

- (1) Intergroup Social Dynamics - examining intergroup trust, harmony and tolerance and shared national identity.
- (2) Positive Citizenship - measuring trust in institutions, support for democratic values, reconciliation, and human rights.
- (3) Gender Equality and Social Norms - assessing support for women's leadership, gender stereotypes and violence against women and girls.

It is important to emphasise that SCORE does not label, categorise or stigmatise any group or community. It does not prescribe political positions. Instead, it provides a mirror - a structured reflection of lived experience, perceptions and attitudes. SCORE is, therefore, a tool to support informed, responsible decision-making and social development planning at all levels.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the SCORE Assessment presents a nuanced and balanced picture of social cohesion in Fiji, one that reflects both our strengths and areas requiring attention. Firstly, it indicates strong foundations of social cohesion, but with underlying strengths. The findings show that there is generally a high level of trust and openness to peaceful coexistence and reconciliation among Fijians. For example, over 80 percent of *iTaukei* and Indo-Fijians report trust and acceptance of others into their families and communities. This, itself, gives us much hope.

The assessment also shows that there is a shared sense of national pride and attachment to Fiji and the Fijian identity across different communities. At the same time, the assessment identifies that we are operating in a climate where polarising stories and harmful stereotypes still hold ground and threatening to pull us apart. For example, 49 percent of *iTaukei* respondents believe that Indo-Fijians do not respect the *iTaukei* way of life and culture, while 50 percent of Indo-Fijians believe that Fiji's development would be stronger with more equal participation in politics and access to land. These narratives tend to gain traction when people perceive competition over resources and power, insecurity, exclusion, or unfair governance.

Secondly, the assessment indicates that there is trust in institutions. The assessment indicates generally strong, but varying levels of trust in public institutions and political leadership. While institutional legitimacy and support for democratic and multi-ethnic government are strong, there is a weak attachment to democratic culture, including civic engagement, participation and accountability.

Thirdly, the results indicate strong pro-democracy sentiment. A majority of respondents - 59 percent, state that they prefer democratic governance, even if it involves negotiation, compromise and delays. Furthermore, 72 percent express support for a democratic and multi-ethnic system of governance, even when this may require sacrificing some interests of their own ethnic group. Together, these findings suggest a strong commitment to inclusive governance and pluralism, prioritising democratic principles over narrow group interests. However, it is worrying, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to note that 40 percent of respondents agree to strong-armed leadership to achieve a goal.

The fourth insight is about women's leadership. The assessment shows positive, but uneven support for women's leadership. Support is particularly strong among young women, people in rural communities, and those with higher levels of education. For example, 81 percent of young women support women's political leadership, compared with 66 percent of young men, and in Provinces such as Lau and Kadavu, over 85 percent of respondents endorse women as leaders. These findings should inspire us, as Members of Parliament and political leaders, to amplify positive examples and strengthen ways for women's leadership, including increasing the number of women represented in Parliament.

At the same time, the assessment reveals unacceptable levels of tolerance and acceptance of

gender stereotypes, and normalisation of violence against women, particularly among young men. For example, over 70 percent of young men - 18 years to 35 years, endorse beliefs and norms that normalise or justify violence against women under certain circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, 70 percent is very concerning. Specifically, 31 percent believe that women who speak openly about abuse by their husbands should be shamed, and 22 percent believe that women should tolerate violence to preserve family unity. These attitudes reflect the deep infringement of harmful gender norms and the social acceptance of caution and silence, underscoring the urgent need for transformative gender responsive approaches and targeted engagement with young men to challenge norms, shift attitudes and prevent violence.

On the implications for policy governance and politics, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the value of the SCORE Assessment lies in how it informs actions. Strong social cohesion is not just a social good - it is a powerful enabler and accelerator of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular, SDG 16, that promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, SDG16 is a prerequisite for and an enabler of the entire 2030 Agenda. For us here in Fiji, the SCORE is necessary for our reset as a nation. The findings reinforce that social cohesion is not the responsibility of one Ministry or one institution alone - it intersects across Government machinery, civil society, faith groups and community leadership. Our government will utilise SCORE findings to strengthen social cohesion as a whole of Government mandate, continue to improve participatory governance and public consultation, and ensure that development policies are inclusive and equitable.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, social cohesion is a shared responsibility. This august House has a critical role to play, not only through legislation and oversight, but through the example it sets in discourse, debate and cooperation across differences, as His Excellency the President had shared in his Opening Address of this Parliament. As Fiji engages in critical democratic processes such as the Constitution review, it is important that political leadership uphold the spirit of dialogue, restraint and inclusivity, ensuring that discussions on the Constitution become moments that reinforce trust in democracy and strengthen the bonds that hold our diverse society together.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I may digress a little, a lot has been said about nationality after the submission of the Great Council of Chiefs to the Constitution Review Commission, albeit, through the media. The Great Council of Chiefs are leaders of their people from the 14 Provinces, so I believe that it is important to take the time to understand their perspective, their vision, their fears and their hopes. We need genuine face-to-face dialogue; such an important conversation cannot be heard across the media.

We have to remember that this issue has been central to each of our political upheavals over the past four decades, and it is important that we take the time to listen deeply and engage respectfully to build consensus. We cannot move Fiji forward if we cannot build consensus on national identity. This cannot be forced; it has to be agreed upon. Similarly, we have to create spaces to listen deeply to each community who call Fiji their home and understand their fears and hopes in genuine dialogue to move the nation forward.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as we have learned at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), there are 144 active conflicts around the world, with tens of millions displaced in Africa, Asia and in the Middle East. In South Sudan alone, where our officers serve to keep peace, more than 44 million people have been displaced. Global conflicts give us a perspective of how precious our peace is.

We need to guard our peace, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and we have it in us to truly build Fiji the way

the world should be - truly engage with our diversity and build sustainable peace from the trust that have already been established over generations. If the assessment has shown us anything, it is that Fiji's diversity is not a weakness - it is our strength. Our challenge is to ensure that every citizen feels seen, heard and valued within the national story.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, over the next two weeks, we will have the SeeD consultants in Fiji, running a series of discourse to share detailed data and have conversations that will guide further work. There will be workshops with youth, women, civil society, and public engagements, and I invite honourable Members of the House and the public to engage and commit to building a more cohesive nation. Our Coalition Government remains firmly committed to building a Fiji where peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and shared prosperity are not aspirations, but lived realities.

Before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the nation to pray for the Police Officer who was injured in the line of duty last Friday and currently fighting for her life. May I also offer my deepest condolences to the relatives of five lives lost in a tragic house fire at Baulevu in Nausori. Actually, seven lives were lost as two dogs also perished in that deadly blaze. I also offer our prayers for strength to those awaiting their loved ones missing in the Kadavu waters. In such difficult times, may these families find peace and strength through our prayers and solidarity.

MR. SPEAKER.- I thank the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection for her Statement. I will now invite the honourable Leader of the Opposition, or his designate to respond.

HO. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to respond to the Ministerial Statement delivered by the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection regarding the findings of the 2025 SCORE Index Assessment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this study confirms what many of us feel in our hearts, that the spirit of unity and harmony is already woven into the daily lives of our people. When we see that, over 84 percent of *iTaukei* and 93 percent of the Indo-Fijians expressed genuine trust and acceptance towards one another, we are seeing the true face of Fiji. This is not a manufactured piece - it is a lived reality in our markets, neighbourhoods and our workplaces.

However, Sir, we cannot be complacent. The study also holds up a mirror to the risk we face. While the majority of our people are walking the path of togetherness, there are still those who seek to pull us apart. We must work tirelessly to show both, our citizens and the world, that ethno-nationalism and religious extremists have no place in the modern Fiji we are building.

A significant majority, 72 percent of respondents, explicitly favour inclusive multi-ethnic governance over systems that serve narrow group-based interests. This is a powerful mandate from the Fijian people. They are telling us that they value the "we" over the "me". We must be wary of the fragility noted in the report; when underlying stereotypes persist, they act as dry grass waiting for a spark. It is our duty as leaders to ensure that those sparks, whether they come from extremists, rhetoric or divisive social media narratives, never find matches.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the findings regarding our youth and our gender norms deserve our full attention. If we want a resilient Fiji, we must ensure that our young people are not just bystanders to peace, but its primary architects. We must challenge any norm that suggests that one Fijian is lesser than another based on their background or their gender.

As the general election approaches, we stand at critical crossroads. It is during these times that the strength of our national fabric is most tested. We must all, regardless of which side of this House we sit on, raise the banner of national unity, and firmly rebuke those few who will try to ignite

divisional politics. In putting the people first, we must ensure that the fragility identified in this study is not exploited. We cannot allow extremism to be used as a tool to distract from the real issues facing our families. Our focus remains on a path of ideas and service.

Fiji has matured into a nation where the majority of its rules are based on a heart of inclusion. By standing together, we ensure that the true winner of the upcoming election is the long-term peace and unity of all Fijians. Mr. Speaker, Sir, with these words, thank you very much for this opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER.- I thank the honourable Lal for his statement on behalf of the Opposition. Thank you, honourable Members, that brings us to the end of the Ministerial Statements this morning. We will now proceed to the next item on the order paper. The first question for today. I now call on the Honourable Hem Chand to ask question one of 2026.

## QUESTIONS

### Oral Questions

#### Equal Access to Special Education Services (Question No. 01/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Education update Parliament on the steps the Ministry is taking to ensure that students in rural and maritime areas have equal access to Special Education Services?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question. I just want to confirm whether he was referring to Special Inclusive Education or just Special Education Services?

HON. H. CHAND.- This question is in regard to Special Education.

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that the Ministry of Education remains firmly committed to ensuring that all learners in Fiji, including children with disabilities, in rural and remote and maritime communities, have equitable access to quality education in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which is inclusive and equitable quality education for all and lifelong learning skills. This is underpinned by Fiji's obligation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), particularly, Article 24.

The Ministry of Education has a Special and Inclusive Education Policy, recognising that disability does not reside in the child, but in the barriers within our environment, system, attitudes and practices. Our responsibility as the Ministry of Education, therefore, is to remove those barriers and provide reasonable accommodation and appropriate support, so that every learner can reach their full potential.

The Ministry of Education has a dedicated unit, which is the Special Inclusive Education Unit, which is responsible to conduct Special Education Services nationwide, allocate resources and monitor the implementation of those resources.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry provides Special Education Grants to special inclusive schools or institutions that offer education services in accordance with the MOU policies and priorities. The Special Inclusive Education Grant is determined by an equitable formula. It is conducted by the

Special Inclusive Education Unit, depending on the level of disability of a child, and there are three categories: mild, to moderate and extensive needs. That is filled and uploaded on FEMIS by respective Heads of School, which calculate grants for Special Inclusive Education students. The baseline is \$500 per child, plus the disability index.

There are, at the moment, 18 Special Schools around the country, and they are located within the vicinities of mostly urban towns and cities, and access is usually limited for those students in the outer and rural communities. The Ministry for Education (MOE) is prioritising inclusive education in these particular areas and local schools, as the honourable Member is fully aware of the need to include inclusive education in these schools.

In expanding services beyond urban schools through district-level coordination and the nationwide implementation of the policy, there are 1,253 students currently enrolled in these 18 schools that have the following disabilities, Mr. Speaker, Sir - physical impairment, mobility device users, wheelchairs, walkers and crutches, hearing impairment, fully deaf, partially deaf, visual impairment, low vision, blind, socio-emotional impairment, intellectual impairment, and children with autism.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the enrolment of these students with special needs in these 18 schools are open throughout the year, which allows for continuous enrolment and transition. The 18 schools are spread across the country:

- 6 Schools - Suva District;
- 4 Schools - Lautoka/Nadi/Yasawa District;
- 1 School - Ba/Tavua District;
- 1 School - Ra District;
- 1 School - Nadroga/Navosa District;
- 2 Schools - Nausori District;
- 1 School - Cakaudrove District;
- 1 School - Macuata/Bua District; and
- 1 School - Eastern District, in Levuka.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in terms of infrastructure, all these 18 schools are built to accommodate students with various disabilities and are disability friendly.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are 115 qualified teachers who specialise in special education or special inclusive curricula:

- Certificate in Special Education - 29 teachers;
- Diploma in Special Inclusive Education - 50 teachers;
- Bachelor in Special Inclusive Education - 34 teachers; and
- Masters in Special Inclusive Education - 2 teachers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the heart of inclusive education, recognition of this in 2025, 168 teacher aides in special inclusive schools were trained in inclusive education practices. The Ministry continues its collaboration with the other Ministries - the Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the Department of Social Welfare to support assessments, early intervention, and coordinated learning support. The Ministry has also expanded digital access through the disability inclusive education toolkit, which includes fact sheets, teacher handbooks and sign language videos.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is also providing the following special education services, which is supported by the Australian-Fiji Education Programme, which enables learners in rural and maritime islands to remain in their local schools while benefiting from specialist expertise:

- (1) Provide outreach and mobile support services to nearby and remote schools.
- (2) Supporting assessments, intervention, planning and individual education plans.
- (3) Delivering teacher mentoring, professional development training and professional guidance.
- (4) Assisting with referrals for extended services such as assistive devices, learning materials and specialised strategies, and further support.

There has been a significant increase in the number of children with disabilities attending school, particularly in mainstream settings, which reflects a growing shift from segregation to inclusion. This growth, Mr. Speaker, Sir, has revealed areas where further strengthening of systems and capacity is required.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, some of the key milestones regarding special inclusive education is that in 2023, disability data collected through the student learning profile and verified by the Ministry was for the first time automated into FEMIS, enabling an evidence-based planning and accountability. In 2024, a total of 2,295 students with disabilities were enrolled across Special and Inclusive Education schools. This increased to 2,517 in 2025, and a further to 2,812 in 2026, reflecting improved identification, referral and reporting mechanisms.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, access to quality special education services, especially in the rural and maritime areas, remains a significant challenge due to limited trained teachers, inadequate infrastructure, lack of specialised resources and dedicated special schools. My question to the honourable Minister is, what is the Ministry of Education doing to ensure all special and inclusive schools have disability-friendly infrastructure?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I had alluded to, that is a challenge in terms of infrastructure, as I had asked by the honourable Member, whether he was referring to Special Inclusive Education Schools or Special Services Schools. In terms of the Special Services Schools or handicapped schools, they have been built to allow accessibility for students. For Special Inclusive Education Schools, like the one in Bua, the mainstream schools have also accommodated accessibility for students with disabilities.

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Looking at the financial impact and rising costs of logistics, fuel, freight, travel by air or sea transport, I would like to ask the honourable Minister, what are the mitigation plans to ensure that effective delivery of services happens to these schools in the maritime, if the Ministry wants to introduce a staff reimbursement policy in cases of emergency, where they have to fork out money for the effective delivery of these services?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I could not make out the question, whether it relates to the transport assistance or the reimbursement.

MR. SPEAKER.- Can you clarify further, honourable Sharma?

HON. R.R. SHARMA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, being in the Committee, we managed to travel to the maritime islands and heard their challenges. I will stick to the last part of the question. There had been incidents where teachers have taken money out of their pockets to ensure students get what they want, and the school runs smoothly. Is the Ministry looking forward to introducing a staff reimbursement policy so the staff can be reimbursed in cases of emergency or if the grants are

delayed? Is this on the Ministry's agenda?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, if I take it right, he is referring to staff reimbursement for Civil Service. It is covered under the Ministry of Finance's Finance Act. It is relatable to the operations and conduct of that duty. The Finance Act of the respective Ministry will be able to see how we can accommodate those.

HON. V. NATH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, firstly, I would like to declare my interest as Manager of Baulevu High School, although it is not a special school, but a secondary school on Baulevu Road. This is Week 13 and the school still does not have two teachers. This is the third time I am standing in this august House to tell the honourable Minister that Baulevu High School does not have two teachers. Even the whole of last year, they did not have it and, again, this is Week 13. My question to the honourable Minister is, we can have a number of schools, but schools need teachers. What are we doing to get specialised teachers in the classroom? How are we attracting them?

HON. A.M. RADRODRO.- If the honourable Member could specifically identify the type of school in question, because he is generalising his statement. As I have alluded to, we have undertaken proper training for schools that have enrolled specialised students, apart from the handicapped schools.

Update on Fiji's 3<sup>rd</sup> VNRR on SDGs  
(Question No. 02/2026)

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

Can the honourable Prime Minister and Minister for Civil Service and strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics update Parliament on the formulation of Fiji's 3<sup>rd</sup> Voluntary National Review Report on Sustainable Development Goals?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen and students in the gallery, I thank honourable Kuridrani for his question. Before I answer the question, I have just sent our best wishes to the honourable Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs for the speedy recovery of his daughter, who was run over last night at the checkpoint in Laqere.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji's 3<sup>rd</sup> Voluntary National Review Report (VNRR) is a matter of strategic national priority. It is both an accountability instrument for our people and a platform through which Fiji positions itself with the global development architecture.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are comprehensive country-led reporting mechanisms under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, presented at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the Office of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It provides an opportunity for Fiji to assess national progress across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), identify gaps and constraints and also mobilise the partnerships and financing for accelerated implementation. Since 2015, Fiji has demonstrated strong leadership and commitment, having presented two VNRRs in 2019 and one in 2023. These Reports were recognised for their inclusivity and credibility, particularly among Small Island Developing States.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform this august House that Cabinet, at its meeting on the 14th of this month, endorsed the formulation of Fiji's third VNRR to be undertaken during 2027, and presented at the High Level Political Forum in July next year. The process will be led by the Ministry of Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, through a coordinated whole-of-

government and whole-of-society approach. Governance structure will include a high-level core working group, comprising Senior Officials, and a technical working group with representation from line Ministries.

I wish to assure this august House that the 2027 VNRR will not be a bureaucratic exercise. It will be a genuine national conversation - transparent, evidence-based and anchored in the lived realities of our people, including those in our rural maritime communities, who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it would be remiss of me not to be candid to this House about Fiji's 2023 VNRR. Of the 169 SDG targets, Fiji made progress on 24 targets, which is nearly 14 percent of the SDG targets. The 45 SDG targets, representing 27 percent, could still be achieved with accelerated action. Regression progress was recorded in 28 targets, which is 17 percent, a reality for the country. What is alarming, Sir, is that of the remaining 72 targets, 42 percent of SDGs could not be measured due to data gaps.

Notably, Fiji has progressed well and is on track with two SDGs. These include SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation, and SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities. SDG 3 on Good health and Well-being, showed negative progress and requires urgent action. SDG 5 - Gender Equality; SDG 14 - Life below Water; and SDG 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions had insufficient data for accurate measurement. Although available data indicated regression on SDG 14 which is Life below Water, this is of particular concern for a maritime nation.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji's progress is also reflected in global assessments. In the Sustainable Development Report of 2024 and 2025, Fiji achieved an SDG index score of 72.9, ranking 63rd out of 167 countries assessed globally. This demonstrates that continued prioritisation, adequate resources and strong partnerships are essential to sustain progress towards 2030. In fact, in 2025, Fiji was ranked better than our friends in Singapore, which was ranked 69th, with an SDG index of 71.

In the Pacific region, in addition to Fiji's ranking among countries assessed globally, Fiji was ranked as the top-performing country in the Pacific in the last VNRR region report, with more than 50 percent indicators, which was 128 indicators, as compared to the Pacific average of 93 indicators. This was a significant increase from the 88 reported in the first VNRR.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, no amount of good planning will achieve SDG without resources. Fiji's SDG targets are fully integrated within the National Development Plan 2025-2029 and Vision 2050, with each SDG aligned to national key performance indicators, which have been highlighted many times by the honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The third VNRR will, for the first time, include SDG costing frameworks, identifying sectoral investment needs, a comprehensive financing strategy, and clear mapping for funding resources. Potential financing avenues include the climate finance mechanism under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund, multilateral development banks, bilateral partners, and innovative instruments such as blended finance and blue bonds.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Asia and Pacific SDG Progress Report 2026 released by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, highlights that the region is off track to meet its measurable SDG targets by 2030, with an estimated annual financing shortfall of USD1.5 trillion required to achieve the SDGs. This underscores the scale of the challenge before us and the importance of clearly identifying national target-associated costs and financing pathways.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the VNRR is not merely a reporting tool - it is a strategic financing instrument. A credible, transparent and evidence-based VNRR signals policy certainty and national priorities, strengthen investor and donor confidence and align development assistance with national priorities. Through the 2027 VNRR, Fiji will present bankable investment pipelines, align Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with climate and blue economy priorities and leverage partnership to cloud financing.

The establishment of the Green Climate Fund Office in Fiji will serve as a pivotal catalyst to accelerate regional climate action momentum and support cloud financing resources for SDGs 13, 14 and 15, ensuring that climate finance serves the dual purpose of advancing our climate commitments and our sustainable development agenda. Fiji remains resolute and committed to the 2030 Agenda.

We are a small island nation with a negligible contribution to global emissions, yet we stand at the front line of the climate emergency. Our VNRR is not simply a report, it is an accountability document to our people, a signal to our development partners and a testament to this Government's intention, that no one will be left behind. The 2027 VNRR will focus on four transformative shifts.

One of the most significant shortcomings identified in 2023 was that 42 percent of SDG targets could not be measured. For a government committed to evidence-based policymaking, that is unacceptable. The 2027 VNRR will place the strengthening of national statistics system and the SDG data architecture at the centre of its preparation. It will also seek to increase the number of SDG indicators beyond 128, through integration of relevant NDP KPIs that are contextualised in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are also calling for deeper stakeholder inclusivity, as well as national, international and regional cooperation in our efforts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Perhaps, I will take the opportunity to raise a supplementary question. Honourable Prime Minister, you did talk about the improvement of our statistics systems. I do apologise as I, probably, have two parts to the question that I will raise.

This is not new, honourable Prime Minister. When we were reporting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) then before the SDGs, our officials noted that we knew we were implementing some of these goals but, unfortunately, how do we capture what we have been doing? The first part of the question is, again, on the improvements in our statistical systems so that we are able to capture what we have been implementing.

The second part of the question, honourable Prime Minister, I have raised this every now and then. We are now an active member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The four main responsibilities of Parliament are legislation, allocation of resources coming to budget, oversight and scrutiny, and representation. I am pleading with Government, and I did so with our Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and now it is coming to the SDGs, if this can be also tabled in Parliament. If it has not been done before, this is our opportunity because we have made commitments through the ratification of these conventions. Government, through the Parliament, has a responsibility as well to ensure that the allocation of resources is done in the appropriate manner so that we can be more effective in the implementation of this.

My second request, honourable Prime Minister, Sir, please, if this can be tabled in Parliament as well so that we can have an opportunity to discuss it as Parliamentarians.

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- In fact, I do not know whether he needed a response to his supplementary question but, yes, we agree with what he has raised. Parliament will recall that I had

highlighted the KPIs that are now being given to Permanent Secretaries and this morning, I reminded the honourable Ministers that they will be required to supply the Ministry of Strategic Planning with the progress of the various development goals objectives under their portfolio. So, it is work in progress, honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. J. USAMATE.- A supplementary question, Sir; I thank the honourable Prime Minister for the reply to that question. It struck me the issue on life below water and the regression, if I am not mistaken, in our performance against that particular SDG. Was that a data issue or are there things that we are not doing well? If so, what sort of plans would be in place to address the regression in that particular SDG which, as you have highlighted, is something that is very important for us in island nations?

HON. S.L. RABUKA.- The honourable Minister responsible for that issue has been notified about the absence of proper data in our previous response, and to update that for this next one.

MR. SPEAKER.- On the third Oral Question, as I was saying, please, honourable Members, take note that Oral Question No. 3/2026 that was to be posed by honourable Premila Kumar will now be asked later on this week, as the honourable Minister of Finance is indisposed.

(Oral Question No. 03/2026 deferred)

Climate Resilience of Coastal Communities  
(Question No. 04/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar Industry update Parliament on the Grant Agreement between the Government of Fiji and the Asian Development Bank on enhancing climate resilience of coastal communities project?

HON. T.N. TUNABUNA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the honourable Prime Minister, the honourable Leader of the Opposition, honourable Ministers and Assistant Ministers, honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, and students here in the gallery; *ni sa bula vinaka* and greetings to you all.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank honourable Tubuna for raising this very important question - one that directly affects the welfare, safety and long-term security of our coastal communities, as well as the livelihood of thousands of Fijians, whose homes, gardens and food sources are increasingly vulnerable to the impact of the changing climate.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise today to update this august House on the Grant Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Fiji and the Asian Development Bank, for enhancing climate resilience for coastal communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji, like our Pacific neighbours, stands on the frontline of climate crisis. Our coastal communities - the *vanua* that have held our people for generations, continue to face the harsh realities of sea level rise, storm surges, coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion and the increasingly severe and unpredictable weather events.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, prior to the approval of the Grant Agreement by Cabinet, the ADB, together with the Ministry, undertook a comprehensive and a rigorous feasibility study from the period 2024

to 2025. The feasibility study included all the necessary preparatory work, and the communities were thoroughly consulted and were involved in planning, preparation and design of the project.

This bottom-up approach has ensured that the solutions taken forward are grounded in the lived experiences of the people they aim to protect, while also integrating traditional knowledge with modern science to guide the way forward. This preparation, ultimately, led to the project being approved by the ADB on 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2025.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Grant Agreement with the ADB provides a total grant package of USD16.7 million, which is equivalent to FJD37.33 million. This package comprises of a grant of USD15 million from the ADB's Asian Development Fund, specifically, to the thematic Pool 14 of Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Resilient, and an additional grant co-financing of USD1.7 million from the Ocean Resilience through Coastal Adaptation Trust Fund. The Government of Fiji will contribute approximately USD1.19 million through reimbursed taxes, along with an additional USD0.67 million in-kind support. This support includes office space, staff salaries, in-station services and duty exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I further inform this House that following the Cabinet approval and in accordance with the established procedures, the Grant Agreement was formally signed by the Ministry of Finance on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2026.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this project is designed to benefit 15 vulnerable coastal communities across Fiji, directly reaching approximately 3,000 men and women and children. At least, 50 percent of the beneficiaries will be women, with priority given to low-income households and those headed by women. The project will deliver three principal outputs namely the:

- (1) provision of resilient and integrated nature-based coastal protection, including the restoration of mangroves; degraded coastal protection works; and improve drainage and hybrid great green engineering solutions.
- (2) support climate resilient livelihood so that our coastal people are not only sealed from the physical impact of climate change but are also economically empowered to adapt to deliver and to the rapidly changing environment.
- (3) improvement of institutional capacities and integrated coastal protection.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the benefit of this august House, the project will be rolled out in two phases. Phase 1 involves the implementation of work in five coastal communities, each of which has been classified as a sub-project under the project. The five sites under phase 1 are as follows.

- (1) Veitogoloa Village in Namosi;
- (2) Nadogoloa Village in Nakorotubu, Ra;
- (3) Namarai Village in Nakorotubu, Ra;
- (4) Vanuavou Village in Vaturova; and
- (5) Kanakana Village in Tunuloa.

Phase 1 is scheduled to run from June 2026 to June 2027.

Phase 2 is scheduled to begin in August 2027 through to August 2032. This will include additional 10 sites. These sites have yet to be confirmed and finalised. That will be announced in due course after the completion of all necessary assessments and consultations.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, following the signing of the Grant Agreement in March 2026, I can confirm to the House that my Ministry is in the final stages of recruiting the Project Management Unit Project Consultants, who will lead the day-to-day implementation of the project on the ground. The project proper, meaning the start of the full implementation work, is expected to commence by early June 2026. Once the project consultants have been fully appointed and are in place, from that point forward, communities across Fiji, especially those in our targeted coastal areas, will begin to witness clear underground progress throughout the five-year implementation period.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me close by reaffirming this Government's unwavering commitment to the protection of our coastal communities' climate action that is both, ambitious and practical, and the development that is grounded firmly in the voices of our own people.

I wish to place on record Fiji's sincere appreciation to the Asian Development Bank and to the Government of Ireland, to the honourable Minister of Finance and his Ministry, and to all partner agencies and, most importantly, to the men, women, youth and elders of our coastal communities, who have worked with us, consulted with us and shaped this project from the very beginning.

LTA Enforcement Mechanisms - Designated Bicycle Lanes  
(Question No. 05/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Transport and Meteorological Services inform Parliament on the enforcement mechanisms that the Land Transport Authority have in place, to address the issue of motor vehicles parked in or obstructing bicycle lanes at Queen Elizabeth Drive?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank the honourable Member for the question.

Sir, the Ministry of Transport, through Land Transport Authority (LTA), advises that strict compliance enforcement is actively maintained through a structured plan of regulatory controls, operational enforcement, and collaboration with the Fiji Police Force. In that regard, enforcement mechanisms include the issuance of Traffic Infringement Notices (TINs), whereby penalties for illegal parking or stopping in prohibited areas have been revised and increased to \$100, reflecting the seriousness of such contravention.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, vehicles that are detected to be obstructing traffic flow, particularly with designated clearways bicycle lanes are subject to immediate towing and impoundment, with all associated costs fully borne by the registered owner of the offending vehicle. In circumstances involving repeat or serious breaches, offenders may be escalated to show cause proceedings, which may result in suspension or cancellation of driving licences with established legal processes.

From operational standpoint, the LTA undertakes regular joint enforcement operations, as mentioned, with the Fiji Police Force, with attention directed to high-risk locations, including Queen Elizabeth Drive. These operations are enforced through mobile patrol deployments and daily monitoring, to ensure prompt detection and response to violations.

In light of ongoing concerns relating to illegal parking and unsafe driving behaviour within this corridor, enforcement visibility and operational presence have been further strengthened. At the same time, members of the public are encouraged to support enforcement efforts by reporting incidents via SMS, Code 582, or through the Authority's official communication channels. Within

the designated urban clearway zones, stopping parking or waiting is strictly prohibited at all times, and this prohibition applies equally to all categories of road users.

In conclusion, these combined enforcement efforts are directed towards strengthening road safety outcomes, ensuring the proper and intended use of bicycle lane infrastructure, promoting responsible and lawful behaviour. We will continue to strengthen existing systems, regulatory oversight, and targeted initiatives aimed at improving safety and efficiency in terms of public transport safety management.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Can the honourable Minister inform the House if there is a current restriction on heavy goods vehicles passing through that particular road? If not, will there be one?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- That is an issue being looked into, not only at Queen Elizabeth Drive but specific corridors, including at certain times. Heavy vehicles need to be restricted, so that is currently under assessment.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please, take note that Oral Question No. 06/2026 that was to be asked by the honourable Assistant Minister for Defence has now dropped, as this has been addressed in the Ministerial Statement by the Minister for Environment earlier today.

(Oral Question No. 06/2006 dropped from Order Paper)

Update on Fiji's National Security Strategy  
(Question No. 07/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs update Parliament on the implementation of Fiji's National Security Strategy?

HON. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for his question. Before I answer that question, I would like to, perhaps, acknowledge the kind thoughts that have been expressed this morning by honourable Members of the House - the recovery of my daughter, given the incident over the weekend, and on behalf of my family, I thank you all for your kind thoughts and prayers. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

Mr. Speaker, following the endorsement and launch of Fiji's National Security Strategy in 2025, the Government has moved to put in place the structure required to implement it effectively. A key step has been the reform of the National Security Council, now positioned at the central decision-making body on national security and foreign policy.

Its streamlined composition ensures that the most critical issues, from intelligence priorities to major security investments, are considered at the highest level of Government with clear authority and direction. Supporting this, the establishment of the Senior Officials Committee (SOC) on National Security brings together Permanent Secretaries and the leadership of Disciplined Forces to provide coordinated advice and ensure that decisions are carried through across Government.

We have also secured Cabinet endorsement for the resources required to drive implementation, including the establishment of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework within the Ministry. This ensures that progress is tracked, debts are identified early, and our response continues to adapt to emerging threats. This work is supported by a structured programme through the National Security Council, with focused attention on priority areas such as counter-narcotics,

energy, security and critical infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, what this reflects is a more coordinated and disciplined National Security System (NSS), where decisions are centralised, implementation is aligned, and accountability is clear. While the administrative responsibility for the Strategy continues to be refined across Government, the direction is clear and the systems are now in place to support sustained implementation.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, can the honourable Minister advise Parliament whether the attempted breach of the RFMF Armoury had been anticipated as a threat scenario within Fiji's National Security Strategy (NSS)? If so, what specific protocols under NSS were activated in response?

HON. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, because the investigations are ongoing, I cannot comment on the actual conduct of the attempts that were made. Nevertheless, the NSS is the encompassing Strategy for events such as this.

As I had explained earlier, the establishment of the security structures provide the policy that guides the way, and institutions that are governed under this policy have to react. The big thing that came out of that is, at the moment, we are looking at the new Republic of Fiji Military Forces Defence Act. These all encapsulate the whole functions of the RFMF, in general, that looks after such important critical infrastructure. However, if they do get breached, then this actually creates a threatening environment for our country.

Attempts were made in the past, so one good thing about the incident that happened is, it actually tested the effectiveness of the electronic systems that were there. That is the very reason why the systems are there, that if people want to attempt to do that, then it is ready to stop any of those attempts. Obviously, the RFMF Commander has said and we have also noted, that we do not take these things very lightly and breaches of the Armoury or the magazines, or any attempt to do so, is a serious offence and would be repelled at any cost. However, coming back to your question, obviously, the NSS looks after that and at the professionalisation of the RFMF going forward. We would like to continue to see improvements in these areas whereby no such thing is going to be happening again.

HON. I.B. SERUIRATU.- Honourable Minister, you have made some announcements regarding the proposed hybrid model. I would kindly ask you if you can explain more on the hybrid model because of the recent incident?

It was not the intention, but since the recent incident about the drug cases because the intent is to strengthen Fiji's response to escalating issues which you are well aware of, where does this hybrid model fit within? What we are familiar with as a British system is the doctrine of aid to civil power, because that requires clear legal frameworks.

You have talked about the Republic of Fiji Military Forces Act 1949, political directions, and unified command structures as well. Could you, please, elaborate on the issue of this hybrid model within that context, honourable Minister?

HON. P. TIKODUADUA.- I thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for that question and an important question for clarification. The idea of the hybrid, of course, was suggested by the National Security Defence Review Committee, which looked at the model of NORFORCE as one area that could be looked at, where legal enablers would allow the Military, the Police, and local law enforcements in Australia to work together, under a set of laws, that would allow them to demarcate

their responsibilities for the different areas, but coordinate to be able to work jointly together, for the protection of the Northern Territory of Australia.

That was the model that we had looked at, and I had made this suggestion because at one point, if you will recall, there was a strong persuasion, I suppose, for lack of a better word, by the public at large in many places that they wanted the Military to come in.

Obviously, we were quite reluctant about that, given the history that we have, but we wanted to suggest ideas on how this could work out together, given the enabling legislation. However, this is something that was, of course, discussed at TNSS, as something that we definitely have to see, going forward.

As you know, Mr. Speaker and the honourable Leader of the Opposition, for the Military to come out in support of the Police, as they are doing now, is something that has to be endorsed and requested by the Police. Of course, the operational and tactical aspects of the work now have to be defined, as you would know, with regards to how the mission is to be achieved, understanding the demarcation of the role of the Police and the Military, and how to sustain it to make sure that no one gets into trouble. Of course, there are questions raised, at the moment, in terms of some of the activities that had already happened which the Police is now investigating.

However, in a nutshell, that is really what the hybrid model is about. Hopefully, through the consultations of the new Republic of Fiji Military Forces Act and the new Defence Management Act, we will be able to see the transformation of the future roles of the RFMF to be able to almost immediately react without having to wait for a while, because the uncertainties of the legal obligations have to be cleared first. So that is what the hybrid model is all about, and I hope that, kind of, addressed your question in a particular manner. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, before we suspend our proceedings for lunch, I think, we all join the honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection and our honourable Prime Minister in offering their and our condolences to the families of those killed and sympathise with the accident victims on our roads over the weekend. We especially wish the honourable Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs' daughter a speedy recovery from her serious injuries.

Honourable Members, we will now suspend proceedings for lunch. Parliament will resume proceedings at 2.30 p.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 12.34 p.m.

The Parliament resumed at 2.35 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, please, join me in welcoming the third group of the PL100 students from the University of the South Pacific who are with us this afternoon. I hope your visit will expand your understanding of how your Parliament works and the role it plays in determining and safeguarding our democracy. We thank you for joining us this afternoon.

New Grant – Japan-Fiji Official Security Assistance  
(Question No. 08/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Defence and Veteran Affairs inform Parliament on the New Grant Assistance under the Japan-Fiji Official Security Assistance (OSA) on enhancing disaster response capabilities?

HON. P. TIKODUADUA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji's engagement with Japan under the Lomavata-Kizuna Partnership continues to strengthen our disaster resilience and emergency preparedness, grounded in a relationship of trust and mutual respect.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, OSA is a strategic initiative by Japan to support like-minded countries through the provision of equipment, supplies, and infrastructure to enhance security and response capabilities. Fiji was among the first recipients of this assistance in the Pacific in 2023, with support directed through the Republic of Fiji Military Forces Naval Division. The assistance delivered tangible physical improvements. This included maritime equipment and support assets used in patrol and surveillance operations, upgrades to operational and storage facilities, and communications equipment to improve coordination at sea. These are practical ground-level enhancements that strengthen our ability to protect our maritime domain.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the new grant assistance for Japan's fiscal year 2025, signed on 30th March, 2026, will further enhance Fiji's disaster response capability through the provision of ambulances, field medical tents, and automated external defibrillators. These are critical assets that will strengthen emergency transportation and frontline medical response during large-scale disasters.

I wish to emphasise the importance of direct engagement in securing these outcomes. My recent visit to Japan and my meeting with Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi was instrumental in advancing this cooperation. Face-to-face engagement allows Fiji to clearly present its national priorities, particularly the increasing demand placed on our response agencies by climate-related events. It ensures that assistance is not generic but tailored to our specific operational needs. It also strengthens trust at the highest levels, which is essential in securing timely and meaningful support. Through this engagement, Fiji has positioned itself as an active partner. We are not simply receiving assistance; we are shaping it to ensure it delivers real outcomes for our people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, for a small island developing state such as Fiji, disaster preparedness is essential. This support strengthens our national response capability, aligns with our national security strategy, and enhances our ability to contribute to regional humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. On behalf of the Government and the people of Fiji, I convey our sincere appreciation to the Government and the people of Japan for this continued and meaningful support.

Update on Non-Revenue Water and Reduction Level  
(Question No. 09/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport inform Parliament on the current level of Non-Revenue Water (NRW) and how much has it reduced over the last three years?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the current national level of Non-Revenue Water (NRW) stands at 47 percent, with the highest levels recorded in the Central and Western Divisions. It remains a significant operational challenge for the Water Authority of Fiji and addressing this issue continues to be a key priority for Government. While this remains high, it reflects longstanding structural challenges within the water network, including ageing infrastructure, increasing system demand, and historical underinvestment in the asset renewal.

Analysis of the national Non-Revenue Water position shows that approximately 82 percent of total losses are concentrated within our four large water networks: Suva-Nausori, Nadi- Lautoka and Labasa. This clearly indicates that Non-Revenue Water is not uniformly distributed, but heavily concentrated in the country's main urban supply corridors. As such, a targeted approach is necessary and effective. Over the past three years, reductions have been incremental, as efforts have focused on stabilising operations, improving data integrity, and strengthening system controls, establishing the foundation for more impactful interventions.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government has now moved to a more structured and performance-based model. The Water Authority of Fiji has engaged specialists through a performance-based contract currently focused on the Suva-Nausori system, which is the largest and most critical network. The work involves:

- (1) Leak detection;
- (2) Minor repairs;
- (3) System automation to efficiently detect leaks through various methodologies, change in water pressure or water flows, et cetera; and
- (4) Identification of major infrastructure to be replaced, i.e. pipes in the prioritised critical works programme.

The timelines will be from year one to year five. We are currently working through year one and systematically assessing and budgeting for the critical replacement, especially pipe replacement works.

Part of the work is also capacity building which involves secondment so that the Water Authority of Fiji staff are aware of the methodologies and there will be an uptake of technological dedication, et cetera, so that we can develop internal capacity once the consultancy is over. Under this programme, a reduction of approximately 20 percent from the established baseline of a five-year period once the consultancy is over.

Under this programme, a reduction of approximately 20 percent from the established baseline over a five-year period is targeted within the pilot area. The approach is designed to deliver measurable results, strengthening internal capacity and establish a proven model for broader application. Subject to performance outcomes, this model is intended to be progressively rolled out to the Nadi, Lautoka and Labasa systems where the majority of national water losses are concentrated in addition to the Suva-Nausori. This ensures that investment and effort are directed where they will

have the greatest national impact supporting improved efficiency, financial sustainability and service reliability.

HON. V. NATH.- I thank the honourable Minister for his answer. Mr. Speaker, in 2022, when we were on the other side and the honourable Minister was sitting where honourable Kumar is sitting, he usually threw these kinds of questions. People living in glass houses should not throw stones.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in 2022 the percentage was 47 percent and again today he is saying that it is still 47 percent, that means no improvement has been made. I do not doubt the work of our engineers as I have worked with them. They are very hardworking but still they need confirmed direction. We gave them a lot of solutions. There was leakage from ageing pipes, illegal connections, meter inaccuracy and billing efficiency. Have you corrected or acted on any of these faults which I have mentioned?

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the kind of hogwash we are subjected to in every question. The last question was on regulations on LTA. Those regulations are publicly available. So, I do not think it should be asked here. For this one, I have already explained the situation, and you had mentioned that it has remained the same. I just mentioned the 47 percent, it has reduced but incrementally, from the last three years it was 50 percent. For us who did Foundation Mathematics, 50 minus 3 is 47, so it has reduced.

Also, the honourable Member was an Assistant Minister for Infrastructure at that time, and I would expect him to at least show some appreciation for the hard work being done currently by the Water Authority of Fiji. He mentioned I was sitting on the other side. Yes, he was sitting this side and if he works hard after this year, he will be sitting this side. So, make sure you work hard, campaign strongly which is part of the question.

HON. J. USAMATE.- I think the honourable Minister must be instructed to tell the truth. When I left as Minister in 2022, the non-revenue water was 47 percent; 47 percent minus zero is 47. That means there is absolutely no change.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not an easy task, I appreciate the difficulties. I am glad to see that the honourable Minister has a plan of a five year targeted. I can see that he has mentioned that the focus currently is in this area. Do you have specific targets over the next five years specifically for the major area that you are targeting which is this corridor here?

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

HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not sure whether to answer or not because I already mentioned in my response the figure. So, I will repeat, the target is 20 percent over the next five years. We never know, by the time we reach the 20 percent, I will be sitting there, and you will be sitting here.

MR. SPEAKER.- I thought it was easier, honourable Minister, to answer honourable Nath's question and are you making any effort? All you needed to say was, 'yes'.

(Laughter)

Coordination and Activation of the Fiji Cluster System  
(Question No. 10/2026)

HON. N.T. TUINACEVA asked the Government, upon notice:

Can the honourable Minister for Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Risk Management update Parliament on the coordination and activation of the Fiji Cluster System?

HON. M.D. BULITAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the most significant reforms introduced under the revised National Disaster Risk Management Act 2024 is the expansion of Fiji's Disaster Management Framework to address not only natural hazards such as tropical cyclones, flooding, earthquakes and related events, but also man-made hazards and human induced emergencies. This now includes complex and emerging threats such as aircraft crashes, industrial accidents, supply chain disruptions and other crises that may threaten national stability, public welfare and the community of essential services.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this reform is both timely and necessary. It recognises a simple but critical reality in the sense that modern crises are no longer single sector events, they are system-wide risks - increasingly global conflicts, economic shocks, fuel supply disruptions, cyber incidents and other external events can have direct humanitarian consequences for small and open economies such as Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the current global fuel situation, driven by the geopolitical tension between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to create uncertainty in international oil markets and in the supply of crude oil to countries that depend heavily on imported fuel. For a small, open and import-dependent economy like Fiji, this presents a direct national risk, particularly in our electricity generation, transport and logistics, maritime connectivity, food distribution system and essential public services.

Government has therefore acted decisively by activating the Fuel & Power Emergency Act 1974, appointing a fuel controller who is the Permanent Secretary for Public Works, Meteorological Services, Transport and implementing a Fuel Emergency Action Plan. That Plan includes provision for fuel management measures, the strategic use of national reserves, fuel rationing if required, and the prioritisation of fuel to essential sectors, so that critical services to the public can continue uninterrupted to the greatest extent possible.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, fuel is not simply an economic commodity. It is a background of our national system. A disruption in fuel supply and or higher fuel costs may trigger cascading impacts on the following:

- (a) Transport and logistics through increasing bus, taxi, trucks and shipping costs.
- (b) Energy and utilities through diesel for generators, water pumping stations and backup power.
- (c) The agriculture sector and food through farm inputs delivery, land preparation and food transportation.
- (d) Fisheries and maritime transport through boat, fuel shortage and few fishing trips and maritime travel.
- (e) Industry and businesses through a production slowdown and higher operating cost.
- (f) Tourism sector through airport transfers, tours, hotel operation and food supply costs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this high cost of moving and producing goods, services, food and essential services will further be cascading down to increasing the retail price of goods and services, slower public service delivery and slower development project implementation. The economy's wide impact may include inflation, high cost of living, increase unemployment, increasing government subsidies, and possible reduction in foreign reserves. Recognising these wider humanitarian implications, Sir, Cabinet has approved the activation of the Fiji Humanitarian Cluster System to strengthen national

preparedness, anticipate the wider impacts of any prolonged disruption, and to support the fuel controller in managing the wider national response.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Fiji Humanitarian Cluster System is a whole-of-government and whole-of-society, multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder coordination platform comprising of nine clusters. These clusters are led by the relevant government ministries and permanent secretaries, and supported by local partners, civil society organisations, faith-based groups, development agencies and international partners. Its core function is to ensure that all sectors act in a co-ordinated, prioritised, evidence-driven manner on key national priorities such as health, security, education, infrastructure, food security, social protection, and community welfare during times of crisis.

Last week, the Ministry of Rural and Maritime Development and National Disaster Risk Management convened all nine clusters to finalise their cluster contingency plans together with the Fuel Prioritisation Framework. These plans are aligned to the four stages outlined under the Fuel Emergency Action Plan and clearly identify the actions, responsibilities and interventions required at each level of escalation. The Fuel Prioritisation Framework will assist the fuel controller in ensuring that hospitals, emergency services, utilities, maritime links, transport networks, and other critical sectors receive priority support where necessary. In addition, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the clusters will provide weekly situation reports to Government so that decisions remain timely, informed, and responsive to challenging conditions on the ground. This will ensure that policy decisions continue to be guided by evidence, real-time assessments, and the needs of our people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this approach reflects Government's proactive, responsible, and forward-looking leadership towards crisis management. We remain hopeful that the international tensions will ease and that global oil supply chains will stabilise. We are not waiting for the crisis to worsen before taking action. We are preparing before it escalates. This is the difference between reactive governance and strategic and anticipatory governance. Government's priority is clear, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we need to protect essential services, safeguard key infrastructure and livelihoods, maintain national stability, and ensure no Fijian is left behind.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Fiji is preparing early, acting responsibly, and standing ready to respond in the national interest through the activation of the Fiji Humanitarian Cluster System and Government will continue to ensure that the needs of all Fijians are met during this challenging time.

#### Written Questions

##### Total Infrastructure Budget Allocated (Question No. 11/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport inform Parliament of the total infrastructure budget allocated over the past three years and what percentage of projects were delivered on time and within budget?

<sup>1</sup> HON. RO F.Q. TUISAWAU.- Mr. Speaker, I hereby table my written response in accordance with Standing Order 45(3).

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: Reply to Written Question No. 11/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport under Standing Order 45(3) is appended as Annexure I.

Statistics on Rice Production in Fiji  
(Question No. 12/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Public Enterprises, and Multi-Ethnic Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Arts update Parliament on the following –

- (a) what are the milling figures of rice production in the last 5 years;
- (b) what plans and incentives are there in place to improve rice production and minimise imports; and
- (c) what percentage of rice are milled at Fiji Rice and other private millers?

<sup>2</sup> HON. C.J. SINGH.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, before I hand over my answer, I would like to say to the honourable Leader of the Opposition, you had been chasing me when I was the Minister for Sugar, bombarding me left, right and centre. Now, coming to rice, just give us a bit of time. I will answer you properly later on.

Having said that, the honourable Leader of the Opposition was in Muanidevo where the rice mill is. I heard he had a lot of chicken curry, a lot of rice and campaigning. My colleagues told me that they told him, “You can have all the curry and rice, but no votes.” By the way, I am handing over the answers.

Unpaid Overtime and Patient Referrals  
(Question No. 13/2026)

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

Can the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services inform Parliament on the following –

- (a) the total unpaid overtime owed to health workers and how long has this liability been accumulating to date; and
- (b) the number of emergency patients that were referred to private facilities since 2023 and the total cost of these referrals?

<sup>3</sup> HON. DR. RATU A.R. LALABALAVU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I table my response.

**REVIEW REPORT – FIJI ASSOCIATION OF SPORTS AND  
NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE 2022 ANNUAL REPORT**

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

That Parliament debates the Review Report on the Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee 2022 Annual Report that was tabled on 27th November, 2025.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I second the motion.

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<sup>2</sup> Editor’s Note: Reply to Written Question No. 12/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Public Enterprises, Multi-Ethnic Affairs, Culture, Heritage & Arts under Standing Order 45(3) is appended as Annexure II.

<sup>3</sup> Reply to Written Question No. 13/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Health and Medical services under Standing Order 45(3) is appended as Annexure III.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Standing Committee on Social Affairs noted that the Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee have its affiliation with International Olympic Committee, Commonwealth Games Federation and Pacific Games Committee, and played a pivotal role in sending Team Fiji to international and regional games.

Since 1938, Team Fiji have been participating in Commonwealth Games, Olympic Games, and Pacific Games and hosted regional games. The 38 affiliated national sporting federations have attained international exposure and regularly participated in international games with three-way funding from the Government of Fiji, National Sporting Federation and international partners.

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

- (1) FASANOC must continue its affiliation with the three international sporting bodies and facilitate the local sports federation with human resources development, and capacity building.
- (2) Fiji Sports Commission must monitor the development of athletes through its grassroots development plan, and further support FASANOC towards the welfare of all athletes.
- (3) In future, the Government of Fiji must support and lobby for international games to be hosted in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Committee noted that FASANOC's strategic priority areas are aligned with national government priorities and the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Speaker Sir, the Standing Committee on Social Affairs looks forward to the successful implementation and commitment to the recommendations put forward by the Committee.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I have a list of speakers with me. By agreement with the Whips, each speaker is given seven minutes only to deliver his or her contribution.

HON. J. SAUKURU.- Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge and thank the Committee for their dedication in compiling this comprehensive report.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to highlight three key areas from this Report. First, is the support for international and regional events. The Committee has acknowledged FASANOC's intention to actively bid for regional games and recommends that the Government of Fiji strengthen its support and lobbying efforts to host such events. Fiji has a proud history of hosting the South Pacific Games in Suva in 1963, 1979 and 2003. However, Mr. Speaker, Fiji was unsuccessful in its recent bid for the 2031 Pacific Games, finishing second to the Kingdom of Tonga.

It is important to note that in 2017, the Pacific Games were relocated from Tonga to Apia, after Tonga withdrew due to financial concerns. Samoa subsequently hosted the 16th Pacific Games in July 2019. Given this precedent, I respectfully suggest that the President of FASANOC, as Fiji's representative on the Pacific Games Council to formally engage with the Council to revisit the 2031 hosting decision, and explore whether Tonga remains in a position to host the Games.

Second is unlocking the potential in sports talent. Sir, FASANOC continues to promote institutional sustainability by aligning its work with national sporting development goals. Fiji is blessed with immense raw talent. Events such as the Fiji Secondary Schools Athletics Competition, widely known as the Coca-Cola Games or Fiji Finals have become one of the largest school athletics competitions in the world and serve as a critical talent pathway.

Similarly, the Deans Trophy, established in 1939, remains Fiji's most prestigious secondary school rugby competition and a proven pipeline to elite international rugby. Yet, a recurring question remains: where do these talented young athletes go after school? The 2026 Fiji National Sporting Organisation Conference, themed "*Sports – The Engine for Change*", addressed this very issue by proposing a structured Sports Academy Framework. This Framework aims to bridge grassroots talent identification with elite high-performance systems, supported by professional coaching, medical services, and athlete welfare programmes. Central to this vision is the development of a Fiji High-Performance Support System, linking rural talent pathways to a national hub - the Fiji Institute of Sports.

Third, is unlocking the potential in the sports economy. Mr. Speaker, sports is not merely recreation, it is a powerful economic driver. Globally, the sports industry generates approximately \$2.3 trillion annually, with projections to reach \$3.7 trillion by 2030. Studies have indicated that for every dollar invested in sports, there is a return of up to \$20 through economic activity, job creation and tourism development. Sporting events attract visitors, stimulate local businesses and create employment opportunities across multiple sectors, including hospitality, retail, logistics and media.

Furthermore, investment in sports contributes to long-term national savings in health care. As Fiji continues to face rising rates of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), the role of sport and physical activity in prevention cannot be overstated. I take this opportunity to again sincerely thank the Chairman and Members of his Committee for the Reports. I also thank the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Fiji Sports Council, Fiji National Sports Commission and FASANOC for supporting the development of sports in Fiji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, investing in sports is investing in our people, our economy and our future. I commend the Committee's Report and urge continued collaboration to fully realise the potential of sports in Fiji. I fully support the motion and may I wish the best teams win the upcoming Coca-Cola Games.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I am sorry, I misinterpreted the Whips' agreement. It should read. "The Opposition speakers are given seven minutes, while the Government speakers are given only five minutes to deliver their contributions". So that is the order of the day.

HON. F.S. KOYA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, in any event, I will be brief because I think most of the good stuff has actually been mentioned by honourable Saukuru. I want to thank the Committee for its Report. This is a good opportunity, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to focus on something that actually has been, is part of the recommendations that the Committee has handed down.

One of the recommendations is that Government, through the Fiji Sports Commission, provide funding to FASANOC annually for athletes to participate in regional and international games, hence allocate funds for the preparation cost. It also recommends that the Fiji Sports Commission to monitor the development of athletes through its grassroots development plan and further support FASANOC towards the welfare of all athletes.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, as rightfully pointed out by honourable Saukuru, what is beyond the Coca-Cola Games? What is beyond the actual Deans Trophy? What is beyond the football tournaments that actually happens? We are known worldwide for our sporting prowess, but in terms of development, we do lack a lot. I think out of all the sporting institutions that we have, the most successful has been the Fiji Rugby Union. I think it is a good example to follow because they have gone on to prove themselves at an international level and our players are in high demand and big demand all around the world, not just in one particular place. In terms of development, FASANOC is an institution that has assisted in the development of all sports people. I am talking about abled

sportspeople, disabled sports people, et cetera.

On a lighter note, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have in this House two quite well-known athletes on this side of the House. One, I am told, was a phenomenal sprinter, but he never got to go to that particular level. I understand also that that phenomenal sprinter could have one day may have been one of our Usain Bolts. That is none other than the honourable Leader of the Opposition. I am told that the 100 metres was nothing to him. Unfortunately, in the words of the former Prime Minister, “he got married and the only muscle that he exercised was his stomach.”

On the other hand, we have a long distance runner, the honourable Hem Chand, who I understand still runs. But jokes aside, Mr. Speaker, Sir, both these guys were superb athletes who could have gone on to do bigger and better with the skill that they had. There are many, many athletes and sports people around Fiji that look forward to the funding, the assistance that FASANOC gives. So, it is something that we probably must look at to say that we give them the wholehearted support to take them to that next level.

Sports is a billion-dollar industry and if we do the Math, those players who play rugby offshore send a considerable amount of money back to Fiji, back into our economy, and it is a huge thing. Unfortunately, I know football has not gone as quite as well as rugby has, but they are well on their way to actually getting that done and other sports; we do have the quality.

I think one of the things also which is very important in terms of FASANOC, they actually have a development programme, and I think they have got four pillars with respect to focussing on their athletes - how they prepare them, how they focus on the national federations. I think we have got 38 different federations that are part of FASANOC. We must look at it very intrinsically to find out where it is that we can help, because we have a jewel.

All our citizens here, Mr. Speaker, Sir, are very good at sports. We have a lot of children at school who just fall by the wayside because they are not nurtured or attended to. It is something that we must look at. It is something that we must continuously support. I wholeheartedly support what honourable Saukuru has actually mentioned, and I commend the Committee's work. It is a collaboration also, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that needs to exist between the 38 sporting federations that we have and FASANOC is important. It must be done in not a disjointed but a jointed fashion where our athletes benefit.

Taking part in all these international tournaments, et cetera, is only good for the development. All you have to do, honourable Members, is ask these two. If they had the opportunity to go and do better, they would have. I know for a fact, and I am not joking, that the honourable Leader of the Opposition was a phenomenal sprinter in his time, unfortunately it was RKS, but it does not matter, Sir.

With those few words, I wholeheartedly support the Committee's work and the recommendations in it, and I ask that we at all times look at FASANOC as an institution. I also want to take the opportunity to say thank you to Vanessa Kilner, the CEO who has done a phenomenal job at FASANOC with respect to producing this particular Report and their development plan with respect to assisting all our athletes and sports people.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate on the review Report on the 2022 Annual Report of the Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee (*Parliamentary Paper No. 150 of 2025*). This Report, Mr. Speaker, Sir, extends beyond athletic performance. It reflects governance, international representation, and regional positioning.

For the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, FASANOC's work intersects directly with sports tourism, aviation sustainability, and Fiji's global reputation. Established in 1949 and recognised by the International Olympic Committee in 1955, FASANOC has long served as Fiji's gateway to the Olympic movement, ensuring Team Fiji competes at the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Pacific Games and Pacific Mini Games. Participation at this level elevates Fiji's international profile, placing Fiji before worldwide audiences. Athletic success strengthens national branding and deepens Fiji's presence within global networks. Sport operates not only as competition but as representation.

The governance structure demonstrates institutional stability, representation of 38 national federations, a board of management, specialised commissions, and an athletes' commission reflects structured administration centred on athletes' welfare. The emphasis on gender balance at leadership level is significant. Inclusive governance strengthens legitimacy and aligns Fiji with the Olympic movement's standards. Strong governance builds confidence, attracts partnership, and sustains development.

The 10-year Strategic Plan developed in 2022 outlines a framework focused on athlete preparation toward Brisbane 2032, the federation capacity building and operational sustainability, signalling that FASANOC is planning beyond immediate cycles. The intention to expand beyond traditional sporting strengths is equally important. Diversification broadens Fiji's competitive footprint, reduces reliance on a single discipline and strengthens the national brand across multiple platforms. The Report highlights continued efforts to bid for and host regional competitions. Hosting international events generates visitor arrivals, stimulates hotel occupancy, increases transport demand and supports small and medium enterprises.

Sporting events create concentrated travel flows, athletes, officials, media and supporters all contribute to visitor numbers with direct implications for aviation sustainability. Event-based travel strengthens route viability and improves road factors on domestic and international services. Sports and tourism are mutually reinforcing sectors.

The Report acknowledges ageing infrastructure as a significant constraint. International federations assess venue standards, transport connectivity and governance compliance before awarding events. When facilities meet international standards, the pathway to event acquisition becomes realistic and benefits flow directly to host communities. Sir, FASANOC funding model reflects prudent financial management, however, reliance on grants underscores the need for diversified partnerships and operational sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the alignment between sports, tourism and aviation is strategic rather than incidental. Sporting success enhances Fiji's global image. Event hosting stimulates visitor flows, supports aviation routes and strengthen future bids. This cycle reinforces itself through sound governance, infrastructure readiness and coordinated national planning. When our athletes perform and compete with this distinction, the Fiji name travels globally. When Fiji hosts international competitions, our economy benefits. When infrastructure improves, sport and tourism advance together. I commend the Report to Parliament.

HON. J.N. NAND.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Report comes at a time when our nation is at a crossroad regarding the welfare of our young people. While we often look at FASANOC through the lens of gold medals and international glory, I want to look at it through the lens of common men and rural families.

My first point concerns the social cost of inactivity. In many decades as a teacher and someone who has spent more time with a whistle around my neck rather than a tie around my collar,

I have seen a recurring tragedy; the sports fields in our district fall silent and the street corners become loud.

We see our youths, vibrant, talented and full of energy getting mixed up in the wrong crowds because they have no structured outlets for their potential. I see in this Report that FASANOC has a 10-year strategic plan with a focus on sports development. This is silent on paper, but I must ask, is this programme reaching the settlements and the deeper interiors?

We must ensure that the advocacy programme is not just a seminar in a city hotel but a living, breathing presence in the rural communities where the risk of our youth falling into crime and drugs is the highest. Sports is the best social shield we have and are we using it effectively?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, my second point is about the bottom line on funding. The Committee has recommended that the Government provide annual funding specifically for athlete preparation. We must ask ourselves, is the current level of funding actually enough? In my experience on the ground, I have seen coaches and parents digging into their own pockets just to buy a set of boots or pay for a bus to a tournament. If we want our youth to choose the field over the street corner, we must make the field accessible.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Report also mentions that Fiji lost its bid for the 2031 Pacific Games by a mere two votes. This is a clear signal. Whilst our facilities are rated low risk perhaps the consistent investment in the people, athletes and the grassroots coaches is lacking. We cannot expect professional results on an amateur budgets. We need to fund the local clubs that keep our youths occupied every single afternoon, not just a few elite who make the national squad.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we must look at the unseen scoreboard; FASANOC's success should not just be measured by the medals Team Fiji brings home from the Pacific Games or the Olympics. It must be measured by the reduction in NCDs and decrease in youth aimlessness and increase in national unity.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support this motion because of the framework for a stronger Fiji is here in the sport. However, I urge the Ministry and FASANOC to look beyond the elite level. Let us invest in the coaches who are the real gatekeepers of our youth culture. Let us ensure that every child, regardless of where they live, have playing equipment in their hand and a mentor by their side. When we invest in sports, we are not just training athletes, we are building citizens.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, I thank the Committee for the Report. I was sorry to hear that the honorable Leader of the Opposition did not make it to being a champion sprinter, but I know in his recent past, he was trying to be a cycling champion. I do not know whether he has abandoned that. Mr. Speaker, the issue of funding, and I know honourable Nand mentioned that as well, funding for sports in small island States, developing countries has always been a challenge. If you look at funding in the developed countries, a lot of sporting bodies are able to fund it themselves.

What I want to say is, we need to look at the different sporting bodies, whether it is Fiji Football Association, whether it is Fiji Rugby Union and others, and whether the funding model, I know some get more than the others, for example, the Fiji Football Association. Football is a big global sport, compared to some of the others so funding is always an issue. I am sure if the honorable Minister for Finance was here, he would have talked about it more, but as far as I recall, in the last three years, the funding for FASANOC and for international sporting events has been given through or facilitated by the Commission, and these include support for overseas sporting tours of sports coaches, engagement of sports coaches, sports scholarships, outreach programmes and hosting international tournaments, sometimes there are provisions for short-term experts, et cetera.

In the last three years, the Government has provided funding through FASNOC for overseas tour grants, and these have been facilitated in some ways, and supported FASNOC to undertake tours in a more involved way. For example, in 2023, \$120,000 was allocated for the Commonwealth Youth Games. In 2024, there were diverse sets of grants. The former Minister for Sports, I am sure, would recall this, but I think a total of more than a million dollars was allocated for covering preparations and participating in the Solomon Pacific Games, Commonwealth Youth Games, Olympic Games, participation in Paris and boxing preparations, et cetera. In 2025, the Pacific Mini Games in Palau received about \$1.35 million as well.

What I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, I know this has been raised in the past, with respect to the level of funding that we can provide to different sporting bodies, but I guess some of the sporting associations also need to organise themselves better, so that we are able to attract additional funding, sponsorships that can be used to encourage young people to participate in sports.

I think the Government's focus ought to be more on building infrastructure. In the last three years, the Government has provided funding like sporting facilities such as grounds and courts. I know the former Minister did a good job in making sure that those facilities were upgraded using the funding that was allocated by the Government.

I do take honourable Joseph Nand's point with respect to funding, but I guess there is a limit to what the Government can do. Therefore, it is more important to look at how the Government can support building infrastructure rather than funding the routine activities of sporting associations in the country.

With those few comments, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support the Report that is before us.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker. Sir, the Committee noted the positive contributions made by honourable Members during this review period on the Review Report of FASANOC's 2022 Annual Report.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to thank the Board Members, Executive Management and staff members of FASANOC for their commitment, dedication and unwavering support, which has been instrumental to the successful operation of FASANOC. The humble request to FASANOC for the successful implementation of the recommendation put forward by the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

I support the motion before the House, and I thank you, Sir.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

Before we move to the second motion on the Order Paper, I am informed that joining us in the gallery this afternoon is honourable Seema Malhotra, Member of Parliament from Westminster, UK, and Minister for Indo-Pacific and Equalities.

Madam, you are most welcome to our Legislature and, of course, our very Resident British High Commissioner is there with her. Your Excellency, you are most welcome as well.

## **REVIEW REPORT - TAVUA TOWN COUNCIL 2019 ANNUAL REPORT**

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

That Parliament debates the Review Report on the Tavua Town Council 2019 Annual Report, which was tabled on 27th November 2025.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to second the motion.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the town of Tavua is one of the smallest towns in Fiji. Tavua was declared a town on 27th April, 1992. The Council, over the last 33 years, has been striving to improve its services to its ratepayers, business houses, as well as to the visitors of Tavua Town.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee needs deliberation to highlight the following recommendations. Firstly, the Committee recommends that Tavua Town Council collaborate with the Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Environment to expedite the full Environmental Impact Assessment process, to ensure compliance with environmental regulations for the new landfill at Koro No. 1.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee recommends that the Government and relevant agencies prioritise the Sewerage Reticulation Project for Tavua Town Council to prevent further delays and support its sustainable urban development.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee recommends that the Tavua Town Council, in collaboration with the line Ministry, work with the relevant authorities in terms of relocation of the municipal market, bus station, taxi and carrier stand.

In conclusion, Tavua Town Council faces significant challenges in infrastructure, revenue generation and service delivery; hence, immediate Government intervention and legislative support are essential to ensure sustainable urban development and improved quality of life for Tavua residents.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER.- I will now invite the Members from the floor to debate on the motion. I have a list of speakers with me. This time, each speaker is allocated seven minutes. At the end of the debate, we will give the Chairman of the Committee the right to reply.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to briefly contribute to the motion that is before us. Mr. Speaker, Sir, what I am going to say today is the comments that were made before the Committee by the officers of the Tavua Town Council.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, firstly, the serious issue that the Tavua Town Council is currently facing is regarding the revenue collection. Because of this difficulty, the council is unable to carry out any major capital projects, and they also have difficulty in running their day-to-day operations. I suggest that small councils such as Tavua be provided with a direct grant for the operation of day-to-day business and also for the capital projects through their line ministers.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the key finding 3.1, Tavua Town Council, as stated, had identified a site for a landfill at Koro No. 1. Therefore, I would like to urge the Ministry of Environment to assist the Tavua Town Council to carry out the EIA process and also the line ministry, Ministry of

Local Government, to provide the required financial assistance for the proposed project. At the moment, Tavua Town Council is using the site at Rakiraki, which is costing the council a huge amount.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, key finding 3.2, there seems to be a disconnect between Fiji Roads Authority and Tavua Town Council in terms of what Fiji Roads Authority is supposed to carry out. In fact, we were told that Tavua Town Council were not given priority compared to the larger municipalities. I suggest that this matter be resolved at a ministerial level so that the citizens and the ratepayers are not deprived of the basic services.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, key finding 3.3, in recent months, there was a *talanoa* session in Tavua organised by the Government and this matter was raised by the ratepayers and citizens in regard to the sewerage system, as mentioned by the Chairman. I do not want to have any debate on that; I hope that the line Minister will update this Parliament in future sittings.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, key finding 3.5. Before some of my good colleagues from that side and this side will say what I was doing during my time, let me inform the House that we were able to secure the land right at the back of the current market and had the masterplan done. That area, Mr. Speaker, Sir, was also to be reclaimed because of the flooding. Unfortunately, my portfolio was changed, and the rest is history. However, that was going to solve the problem. The current market site was also considered for the relocation of the bus bay and the taxi stand so that no one would park on the main road, as it is today.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in summary, my concern is that at the moment, Councils are facing so many challenges, but we hear that the municipal boundaries are being extended. This is only for the purpose of voting. However, let us not forget that by extending the boundary, the service delivery will be in place. I only hope, that there will be some provisions to assist these municipalities to do the service delivery for the ratepayers and citizens of the respective municipalities. My request to the line Ministry is to assist all small councils with direct grants so that they are able to provide the required services.

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker Sir, I rise to support the motion before the august House and to provide a response to the review report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the Tavua Town Council 2019 Annual Report. I would also like to acknowledge the Chairman and the honourable Committee Members for their comprehensive review, thoughtful and some practical recommendations that are part of this Report. The Ministry of Local Government acknowledges all six recommendations. I am also going to provide our response to some of the recommendations that were put forward by the Committee.

I must also thank honourable Bala for covering some of the issues that were raised by the Committee, as some of these issues are actually affecting smaller councils like Tavua. One of the very important recommendations is a proposal for a landfill, and a request for environmental compliance for the proposed landfill at Koro No. 1.

Mr. Speaker Sir, pursuant to the Cabinet's decision on the establishment of a Regional Waste Management Facility in the Western Division, the Coalition Government has adopted a regionalised approach to waste management. This means that individual towns will no longer develop standalone landfills or even dumpsites.

The Ministry of Local Government, together with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and support by the 10 advisors from the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations, is implementing a comprehensive programme that includes, first remediation of existing dump sites

in Sigatoka, Lautoka, Ba and Rakiraki, where waste from Tavua is dumped, as well as development of an integrated waste management system, which includes waste sorting at source, transfer stations, and a centralised landfill where only residual waste is disposed.

This represents, Mr. Speaker, Sir, a shift from a disposal focus system to a circular ecosystem-based approach to waste management. A very good recommendation, that was recommended by the Committee, is for the Councils to have good coordination with the Fiji Roads Authority.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry is closely working with FRA on the Cabinet submission, to transfer responsibility for the repair and maintenance of roads, footpaths and streetlights back to the municipal councils. This reform will enable localised and more responsive service delivery, allow councils to prioritise work based on community needs, and also improve overall efficiency and accountability. As we speak, Sir, when there is a complaint against one of these basic services, the ratepayers or residents do complain to the councils, and they do not register their complaint with the body that looks after this various infrastructure.

In addition, a revised cost-sharing model is being developed through a memorandum of agreement between the Fiji Roads Authority and municipal councils. This will ensure equitable allocation of resources, create greater transparency and joint planning of the maintenance programme over a three or five-year period.

The Cabinet, last month, Mr. Speaker, Sir, has approved the sharing of responsibilities and also the memorandum of agreement being signed between the councils and the Fiji Roads Authority. These MOA is expected to be signed before the end of this financial year, and the work plan is to be effective from the next financial year.

Sewerage reticulation for Tavua is also a major challenge for the town as well as the residents of Tavua. Development of the sewerage infrastructure is being addressed through the Water Authority of Fiji's Regional Wastewater Master Plan 2024. Under this plan, Tavua will initially be serviced through improved septic systems and operations supported by the regional Eco Sludge Treatment facility in Natabua, Lautoka, serving Tavua, Ba and Rakiraki up to 2040. A dedicated sewerage reticulation network and treatment plant for Tavua is planned, with an immediate medium to long-term horizon, with an indicative investment of approximately \$30 million.

Progress will be implemented in phases. Disability and environmental assessment from the next financial year, subject to funding and the next stages on detailed design and identification, and the construction and commissioning over 3 to 4-year period. Importantly, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Water Authority plans to include funding for the feasibility study in the next national budget, demonstrating the Government's commitment to advancing this critical infrastructure.

On the relocation of market and transport facilities - yes, there is no bus station right now for Tavua, and the council, in collaboration with the ministry, will undertake a feasibility study to identify suitable locations, engage with stakeholders, including vendors, operators, as well as other stakeholders in Tavua.

Other important issues of revenue sustainability, something that is challenging all medium to small-sized councils, something that the ministry has been continuously discussing with our municipal councils on better ways to innovate, ways of broadening the income streams, because it's going to help them not only in the future but also in the long term. The Government will continue to support all these mediums, as well as small-sized councils, in terms of meeting some of the operational budgets as well as the capital budgets in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our Ministry will continue to support small towns like Tavua Town Council in the near future, with more funding from the Government, also going to improve their capital projects that are coming up, as well as some of the issues that they face in the daily operations of the Council. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity, and I commend and support the motion before the House.

HON. V. LAL.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, they say you cannot squeeze blood from a stone, yet this Government seems intent on trying to do exactly that with the Tavua Town Council. We are here today to discuss a report that is less of a financial review and more of a cry for help from a municipality that has been left to fend for itself in the wilderness of bureaucratic neglect, as alluded to by honourable Bala.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when we look at the municipal governance of our smaller towns, we often see a narrative of doing more with less. In the case of Tavua, the report before us today reveals a deeply concerning trend where the less is becoming unsustainable, and the more is being hindered by a lack of institutional support and legislative foresight.

Firstly, let us look at the financial reality facing our town councils. When the Business Licensing Act was repealed in 2020, the objective was clear: to stimulate economic activity and ease the burden of our struggling MSMEs. It was a move designed to spark growth. However, the report shows that this resulted in a loss of 10 percent of the Council's revenue. The failure here, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is not of the reform itself, but in this current administration's failure to provide the promised compensatory support. We were told that there would be a new way forward, yet for years, the Council has been left to bleed revenue without the necessary budget adjustments from the central government.

It is the height of hypocrisy to demand world-class service delivery while allowing a 10 percent deficit to become a permanent scar on the Council's books. Where is the support? Where is the relief for the ratepayers of Tavua?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this report provides that while our municipal leaders are trying to row the boat, the Government has taken away the oars and is now wondering why the Council is drifting towards a waterfall. This neglect is most evident in the state of Tavua's infrastructure.

It is a national embarrassment that in 2026, a primary municipality in the Western Division still operates with no sewerage system. The report highlights wastewater and sewerage leaking into the environment near Tavualevu Village. This is not just an infrastructure gap; it is a failure of the national Government to provide the basic dignity of sanitation to its citizens. The Council cannot build a national-scale articulation system on its own. It requires a government that prioritises public health over photo opportunities.

Furthermore, we see the Council's frustration with the Fiji Roads Authority. This report tells us that Tavua feels invisible when road markings fade and drains overflow. The Council is the one that hears the anger of the ratepayers, but it is the FRA that holds the budget and the power. This centralised neglect must end. If the Government plans to delegate more functions to the Council, it must also delegate the funds to the qualified personnel to manage them.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, look at the irony in how the Government handles environmental assessments. We have seen massive controversial development projects with Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) that have this entire nation up in arms. Somehow, those EIAs seem to fly through the system with lightning speed, but when it comes to a simple, essential landfill project for the people of Tavua and Koro No. 1, the process, Sir, suddenly stalls. The waste piles up while the

paperwork crowds. Why is it that the express lane is open for high-profile interests, but our town councils are stuck in a bureaucratic roadblock for years?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, there was an understanding between the Tavua Town Council and the Rakiraki Town Council to have a common dump site. The dump site at Naria for the Rakiraki Town Council is very close to a primary school. I have been to Naria Bhartiya school. I have seen the flies in the school premises and the compound and not even that, when there is a fire at the dumpsite, the smoke is all around in the compound, and the classes are disrupted.

We have also held talks with the residents there and we have been informed that people are not able to eat outside in their compounds because of the flies. I am requesting the authorities to, please, look into this issue and close down the dumpsite at Naria for the benefit of the school students of Naria Bhartiya School, the teachers teaching there, as well as the residents living in that area.

In closing, we support this Report because it speaks the truth. We commend the Council staff, particularly the women who make up 75 percent of the Finance Department, for keeping the gears turning under immense pressure, but they deserve more than just a 'thank you' in a parliamentary paper. They deserve a government that treats Tavua as a priority, provides the necessary grants to fill the revenue gaps and, finally, bring the town's infrastructure into the 21st century.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, Tavua is a small town. At the weekend, on Saturday, I joined the honourable Prime Minister and honourable Bala for the opening of a very magnificent temple. I think it is not just a place of worship, but it is an infrastructure that is going to change the landscape of Tavua Town. It is going to be good for the economy, and it will be good for people travelling around Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki, to make a visit to that very beautiful and magnificent temple built by a number of very committed people.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other point that I want to make is that Tavua is a small town made up of 2,800 people. It, obviously, would have challenges with respect to the demand for infrastructure and funding for that infrastructure. However, more importantly, Sir, with respect to how towns and cities develop, it is the economy within those areas and how and what is done.

It is this Government, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that after 33 years, was able to resolve the longest strike in the country. We allocated about \$9.2 million in 2004. I think it restored a lot of confidence in the economy of Tavua.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is very easy these days, and the students from the University of the South Pacific would vouch for it - easy to now write beautiful speeches using ChatGPT or AI, but sometimes in the process, you become overzealous and say things that are so exaggerated, and I think honourable Lal was probably exaggerating some of the things that he said.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government had a number of initiatives in the last three years and the members of the Opposition would know from the budget scrutiny that they have done in the last three Budgets, that we allocated about \$3.2 million in the last Budget for waste collection subsidy. It is a very important point that the honourable Minister alluded to. There is \$2.5 million provided for the Western Division dumpsite remediation. Again, that is the Government's contribution towards that.

There is an allocation for Special Administrators in the 2025-2026 Budget, which caters for the payment of salaries for small Municipal Councils that cannot cater for the Administrator's salary. These are examples contrary to what honourable Lal was saying, that Government is not contributing or is not concerned about small towns.

A sum of \$975,000 is also budgeted in the 2025-2026 financial year, from which about \$20,000 is directed towards Tavua Town Council. So, these are examples that I wanted to give to say that the Government is subsidising already. Honourable Kamikamica will probably tell you when he speaks in the next motion, the issues about arrears. We have talked about this in Parliament before when we looked at the previous budgets. Approximately \$71.1 million as of February 2026 is owed in rate arrears. I think more than \$80,000 is owed to Tavua Town Council.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a town which has only, if I am correct, roughly over 300 ratepayers, and that means that it is very difficult for these smaller town councils to ensure that they are able to collect the revenue that they need. The infrastructure costs have been on the rise. So, part of the blame, honourable Virendra Lal and honourable Bala could be on the previous government in terms of managing the priorities that the allocation of resources for infrastructure in small towns as compared to the bigger ones.

I think it is important to make this point that towns and city councils, especially the smaller ones, can only function with Government subsidy because, as I have said, the threshold on ratepayers and the level of income is very, very thin. The other point that the honourable Members from the Opposition forget is that some of their boundaries were extended to include the Rural Local Authority.

In the previous system the Rural Local Authority was under a different Ministry. The town administrators were squarely focused on what they ought to have done within the town and city boundaries, especially for the smaller ones. So, when that was changed, they also had to cater for the Rural Local Authority, and if they are not able to raise more revenue when the Government was not providing additional support, then obviously they would find that they are having an infrastructure deficit.

So, I think the Committee is right to note the challenges of small towns, but I think the Committee also ought to have looked at why we are at this point in time facing those challenges because it is not something that just happened overnight, it has been a culmination of something that has been accumulating over the last decade or so. With those comments, I support the report.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Standing Committee on Social Affairs noted that positive and negative contributions by honourable Members during this debate on the Review Report of the Tavua Town Council 2019 Annual Report.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to thank the Special Administrator and the Chief Executive Officer and staff members of the Tavua Town Council for their dedicated commitment, unwavering support, which have been instrumental in the successful operation of the Council.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I humbly request Tavua Town Council for their successful implementation of the recommendations put forward by the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

On that note, I support the motion before the House and I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity.

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

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

**REVIEW REPORT - LABASA TOWN COUNCIL 2018 ANNUAL REPORT**

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

That Parliament debates the Review Report on the Labasa Town Council 2018 Annual Report which was tabled on 27th November, 2025.

HON. P.K. BALA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second the motion.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU.- Mr. Speaker Sir, in 1939, Labasa Town was incorporated under the Township Ordinance. The Local Government Act was enacted in 1972, hence, the Labasa Town was elevated to township status in June 1972. During the period under review, Labasa Town Council served an estimated population of 27,949 in Labasa urban and peri-urban areas.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Committee, in its deliberation, highlighted the following recommendations as follows:

- (1) The Committee recommends that the Labasa Town Council ensure a timely collection of market stall fees and property rental income to prevent reoccurring arrears.
- (2) The Committee recommends that the Labasa Town Council take legal action through court proceedings to recover the rate in arrears from defaulting ratepayers.
- (3) Further, the Committee recommends that Labasa Town Council continue negotiations with landowners to secure land for the new stadium.
- (4) The Committee recommends that the Labasa Town Council must immediately conduct its own investigation into the construction of the two jetties along the Labasa River.

The Committee concludes that the Labasa Town Council faces significant challenges in its infrastructure development, revenue generation, township expansion and relocation of its parks for recreational activities. Hence, the Government of Fiji must provide vital support towards the sustainable development in Labasa municipality.

On that note, Mr. Speaker Sir, I thank you for the opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, the floor is now open for debate on the motion. I have a list of four speakers with me, each with seven minutes.

HON. H. CHAND.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate on the Review Report on the Labasa Town Council 2018 Annual Report. At the outset, I acknowledge the work of the Standing Committee and the efforts of Labasa Town Council in maintaining service delivery under difficult fiscal constraints. However, this Report also exposes systemic issues that continue to impede the progress.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, let us turn to a matter that directly affects the daily lives of our people, that is, traffic congestion and road infrastructure in Labasa. The town is expanding, yet the supporting infrastructure has not kept pace. There is increasing congestion along the main corridor and a glaring absence of traffic lights to regulate flow during peak hours.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the quality of roads, drainage systems and pedestrian access remains inconsistent. These are not minor inconveniences. They reflect deeper issues in planning, coordination and execution.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, recently, many issues, including traffic congestion by ratepayers, have been

raised. The Council should be proactive and responsive to issues raised by the ratepayers. Councils must take their function and responsibilities seriously and deliver as expected. Town councils in Fiji are responsible for maintaining and improving the quality of services and infrastructure within the town boundary.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, safety infrastructure is being neglected. Basic requests for road markings and signage are sidelined, despite being routine maintenance matters. There is also a clear coordination gap with no structured mechanisms between FRA and the council, leaving the council unable to act on drainage, roads and safety issues without FRA engagement. At the same time, key development initiatives such as the relocation of Subrail Park continue to drag on without clear timelines, raising broader concerns about how we plan for Labasa's future growth.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the end of the day, an investor or a homeowner in Labasa wants to know one thing, is my town moving forward? When \$2 million in rate arrears remains unrecovered and basic road safety projects are static, the answer is not fast enough. What is required now is practical action. There must be a formal and possible coordination between the Fiji Roads Authority and the Municipal Council so that routine infrastructure works are not unnecessarily delayed. At the same time, the Government must address the clear revenue gap created by the removal of business licence fees by putting forward a workable alternative funding model. Equally important, we must ensure that administrative oversights such as delays in tabling audited financial reports are not repeated because transparency and accountability are fundamental to public confidence.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have seen the Committee's recommendations that Labasa Town Council immediately conduct its own investigation into the construction of two jetties along the Labasa River. I hope the honourable Minister is aware of this, and I also hope he will bring the Report and table the investigation report that is carried out by Labasa Town Council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, for the opportunity.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, we have three more speakers and given the lateness of the hour, although I would not like to test time on the speakers in there, I would now wish to continue with the list until its completion, unless there is a violent objection from the floor.

(Chorus of "Noes")

Then, in keeping with the Standing Orders, I will now invite the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move a Suspension Motion.

MR. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, there are only three more speakers left for today, and one Bill under Standing Order 51. If I do not hear any objection, I intend to proceed to complete the list of speakers and on to the Bill without any recess. I hear no objection, in which case, given the hour, and for the purpose of complying with Standing Orders with respect to sitting times, I now call upon the Leader of the Government in Parliament to move a suspension motion.

### **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 so as 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 discussions on Labasa. Even though it was in the year 2018, the other side has jumped to 2026.

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.

### **RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON THE REVIEW REPORT – LABASA TOWN COUNCIL 2018 ANNUAL REPORT**

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate in this august House on the Review Report of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs on the Labasa Town Council 2018 Annual Report. I wish to thank the Committee, the Chairman, and the honourable Committee Members for all their work, and acknowledge the seven recommendations that were included in the Report. Even though it is an old Report, there are a few lessons that can be learned from it.

Listening to the comments by the previous speaker, one of the issues that keeps on arising is the issue of business licence – something that is also affecting the financial sustainability of some of these Councils, especially the medium and smaller-sized Councils. The question asked is, who is responsible for the removal of this business licence? This was done by the previous administration, but now we are reviewing to restore it, because it is affecting the revenue stream of the medium and smaller-sized councils.

Another issue that was raised by the Committee is the rates by the ratepayers of the Labasa Town Council. Of course, one thing that is positive about this Report in terms of rate collection is that the current collection is very efficient. It hovers around 80 percent, but the only challenge is trying to recover the outstanding town rates. Something that the Council has been doing for the past years is the ratepayers profiling to understand the ratepayers and various types of rates, to be able to come up with more practical strategies to try and recover arrears from ratepayers – an issue that happens across all municipalities.

However, one thing that we have done is that, when we came into power, we amended the interest methodology, especially interest on arrears from a compound interest rate to a simple interest rate. We have also reduced the interest rate from 11 percent to 5 percent. In a way, it also helps some of the ratepayers coming on board in paying the rate arrears that have been there for quite some time.

Another recommendation is the area where they can also have another suitable playing field, because, as we speak, Subrail Park is not really up to international standard. For Labasa Town to attract overseas teams and to have international teams to come and play on the turf, they need to have an international-sized stadium. So, now they are looking for places and areas where they can have a good ground, a sporting facility that can attract overseas teams and have more overseas tournaments

on the ground.

There is also an issue of traffic congestion in Labasa. Yes, it has not only been created by this Government, but it has been there for quite some time. We should be thankful that with the *Na Vualiku* programme on board, we will be able to address some major issues that we have in Labasa. With the programme, we will be able to assist the flow of traffic and other basic infrastructure that are needed in Labasa. Hopefully, with that master plan, which is part of the Na Vualiku Project, that is going to help Labasa, which is the hub of Vanua Levu. It is also going to create more opportunities, space and a community that is liveable, and a community, or a town where people of Labasa and commuters who use Labasa as a meeting point, or place where they change their buses and transport, to be a place where they also want to go and visit and live.

The issue on the unauthorised approval of two jetties is something that needs to be taken seriously. It is also before the courts right now. We can only comment on this once the court cases are finalised for these two jetties that were approved.

In a very small-sized council, Mr. Speaker, Sir, one of the challenges faced is the issue of funding, but the Government will continue to subsidize the collection of solid waste, especially for areas that are also being served by Labasa Town Council which are known as delegated areas. One of the recommendations is for the Council to present their reports on an annual basis, something that we are also trying to do internally. We have an audit monitoring team that is now visiting all the municipalities and also assisting the municipalities in the preparation of their financial statements.

With those issues, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for the opportunity and I support the motion before House.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Mr. Speaker, I stand today in this august House to contribute on this very important town council which is very close to my heart as I come from Labasa. A lot has been alluded to about town councils, the issues that they are facing and what is happening in terms of administration.

I was in Labasa a couple of months ago and after talking to business owners, I realized that one of the major issues in Labasa Town is, some of the Special Administrators and some Ministers think they own Labasa Town. I will be honest about this. The problem is, when any investor wants to invest and is in conflict with these people, there are lots of obstructions. I will give a typical example. A hotel is being done at JJs On The Park. Even after the Supreme Court ruling that Mr. Vinesh Dayal has the right to do up the building with \$10 million, along with the landowners who are stakeholders and shareholders to that particular project, the town council served them a notice to stop work. This is not on, Mr. Speaker. The Chamber of Commerce, ratepayers and business owners are asking the Ministers, especially....

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Point of Order!

MR. SPEAKER.- Point of Order from the honourable Minister for Housing.

HON. M.K. NALUMISA.- Standing Order 60 on Relevance. We should be debating the 2018 Annual Report, Mr. Speaker, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER.- You are updating, I think, the date of this Report is further back.

HON. L.D. TABUYA.- Under Standing Order 62(1) - the Member is also imputing improper motive of another Member in the House, seeming to impute improper motive by current Minister(s)

being illegally or perhaps interfering in the workings of Labasa Town Council. If he has proof, he needs to show it, and go through the proper process, making a complaint, but to raise that in the House of an improper motive of a Minister is against the Standing Orders. That is a prohibited reference, Mr. Speaker, and he should withdraw.

MR. SPEAKER.- I know where she is coming from. The provision says that you cannot impute any bad intentions on anyone that you are speaking about, unless you can prove conclusively that is the case. You are referring generally to those, I think, if I am reading it correctly, I think the Minister was saying that you feel that they own the town; correct? And that needs further elaboration, if in fact you were going that way, I think it would not be in order for you to continue in a general fashion as that you are making.

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, on that note, can I urge, on behalf of the ratepayers of Labasa Town, if the honourable Minister for Local Government can hold a public consultation with them so that they can inform him the issues ratepayers are facing in Labasa in terms of the Administrators. I leave it to the honourable Minister for that public consultation to take place in Labasa.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, another issue that was raised, and I commend the Committee, though it is a very old Report, but if you read the recommendations, most of the recommendations are based on recent issues being faced by the Council or the ratepayers. A very proactive approach from the Committee, and I thank them for that.

One of the issues that was raised even when the Public Accounts Committee went to Labasa Town Council was garbage collection. When we talk about Viti Levu, we talk about boundaries. The boundaries of almost all the towns and cities have increased. Unfortunately, if you are looking at Labasa Town Council, Mr. Speaker, Sir, they are only two stages away. There are places like Siberia Branch Road, Golf Link Road, Baigan Vanua, Basoga, Vunivau and Bulileka. I can give you statistics, Mr. Speaker, Sir:

- Bulileka with 1,050 households - 4,500 population.
- Siberia with 650 households - 2,790 population.
- Vunivau with 580 households - 2,490 population.
- Basoga with 320 households - 1,370 population.
- Baigan Vanua with 210 households - almost 1,000 population.

The Government is subsidising Labasa Town Council, and these areas fall within the parameters of just three kilometres. Still, Labasa Town Council is not collecting the garbage. These are heavily and densely populated areas. They do not have places to throw rubbish. I am not too sure why Labasa Town Council, even after a lot of concerns have been raised with regards to this, is sitting silent, doing basically nothing.

They are travelling all the way from Labasa to Seaqaqa, which is 36 kilometres, and from Labasa to Dreketi, which is 71 kilometres to collect the rubbish from commercial areas. Close to around 2,000 households, which are within the parameter or radius of two kilometres, are not collecting the garbage. Again, I ask the honourable Minister for Local Government if he can look into this since the Government is subsidising garbage collection. I think it is prudent for us and essential for the honourable Minister to put Labasa Town Council on notice that they need to collect garbage in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, another was the bypass road that was promised to be built in Labasa. I still recall that after the 2022 General Elections, a prominent politician from Labasa was standing by the railway, saying that that was the place where a bypass road for the people of Labasa would be constructed. Little did he realise that at that point in time, he was standing on the property of the Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC). The FSC, till today, has never allowed that bypass road to be built, but people are still waiting. A promise needs to be fulfilled if we want to have traffic congestion eased in Labasa.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the other is overcrowding taxi bases in Labasa. Taxi owners are crying that though it has been passed in Parliament, no one is doing anything about asking the taxis to return to their original bases. They are still clogging taxi bases in Labasa, which is increasing traffic. People are being charged. Fees have gone up. Infringement notices have gone up if taxis are found parked somewhere else. We do not have enough taxi bases in Labasa Town to cater for more than 500 taxis that are operating in Labasa. This is also very important.

HON. GOVERNMENT MEMBER.- Is it the Government's fault?

HON. A.A. MAHARAJ.- You are in government; please resolve it. Anyone must have caused it, but now it is your responsibility to resolve it. Please get it resolved.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we also need to dredge the Labasa River, it is very important. Clogged drains and culverts are causing flash floods. I think it is long overdue that Labasa River has been dredged. My last question to the honourable Minister for Local Government is, if he can name the owners of the two jetties. This will clarify what I was coming to in the first place. I do realise that it is before the courts, he might not be able to, but when he does, people will be aware of what I was talking about in terms of ownership of Labasa Town.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- Mr. Speaker, Sir, I fully understand the connection that honourable Hem Chand has with Labasa, and of course, honourable Maharaj. But let me just point out, there is always a price for progress. If you look at the number of cars, taxis, buses and businesses around Suva and Nadi that have sprung up in the last 10 years, obviously, there is always a demand for additional infrastructure. However, one thing that the honourable Members must also point out that Labasa and indeed Vanua Levu is actually booming now. So, apart from all the stories that people tell you about the congestion in Labasa Town and the need for bypass roads, this is a Government that has taken that on board. As the honourable Minister highlighted, that is now being done.

The Town supports a significant rural hinterland and is actually the hub of Vanua Levu in terms of facilitating trade. The honourable Leader of the Opposition, having been the Commissioner Northern of Labasa knows that time, the economic activity and comparing that 10-15 years ago to what it is now, is quite significant.

The Tourism Development Project in Vanua Levu, which honourable Deputy Prime Minister Gavoka has highlighted this a number of times, that is also, Mr. Speaker Sir, providing additional economic activities, additional pressures on infrastructure, the upgrade of the Labasa Airport, the Savusavu-Labasa link road project. This is about 95 kilometres of route linking Labasa and Savusavu. So, these are programmes or activities that are taking place in Vanua Levu.

As we discussed with respect to Tavua Town, Mr. Speaker, Sir, Labasa Town is much bigger. In fact, there are about 1,200 ratepayers. The business sentiment, honourable Maharaj as opposed to the issues that you have highlighted and I hope that the honourable Minister will look at it, is quite strong.

The issue of rate arrears, Labasa Town Council also is owed, I think, more than \$2 million in arrears. So, there are those very similar challenges, but I think we have to understand as Members of Parliament, and Members of both Government and the Opposition, that we need to look at a revenue stream. Sir, COVID measure was fine, you remove the business licence, but the previous government should have in 2022 restored them. Crisis demands that you put temporary measures. It is just like the rent freeze. They put a rent freeze, Mr. Speaker, Sir, on residential rents in 2007 and now, over the years, it has had a perverse impact.

HON. P.D. KUMAR.- Relevance.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- It is very relevant because you are talking about infrastructure within the town boundary and I am saying that when you put up a crisis measure, it is supposed to be always temporary. So, business licence that was removed must or should have been a temporary measure. Similarly, the rent control or rent freeze should have been a temporary measure. So, now this Government says, “Alright, the Report is recommending that we should bring back the business licence,” these are the same people sitting on the other side will go and say, “the Government has brought back business licences.”

HON. P.K. BALA.- That is what you are doing.

HON. PROF. B.C. PRASAD.- No, but that is what you will do. You go around spreading misinformation on policies that makes sense, that needs to be done.

I think none of you from the other side have said, although some of you were part of the Committee, that we should bring back business licence. Why can you not say that in Parliament, say that in your contributions so that the people out there can understand and know exactly what the Parliament wants?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is important that we look at these issues in a very sensible way. Small town councils will always have infrastructure challenges, especially a town like Labasa where the population is increasing in some way, more developments are taking place, more demand for waste collection, more demand for infrastructure within the town and town councils and administrators cannot do anything. They will have to keep relying on government funding, but they also need to have some revenue sources so that they should be able to do that. What I am saying is, you should have the courage from the Opposition to say, “yes, this time is over, bring this back. Let us do that.”

MR. SPEAKER.- I have a late addition to the list in the honourable Kamikamica. I invite him to take the floor, but he has only five minutes for this contribution.

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to contribution briefly on the Town Council Reports and, of course, like the honourable Leader of the Government in Parliament said, he zeroed-in on the fact that the Report is 2018. I know I have spoken at some length here on the relevance or why are we discussing aged reports in this House. Perhaps for the benefit of the university graduates here, here is a very simple thing to think about as you become adults, if it ain't broke, do no try and fix it.

Mr. Speaker in 2009, the other side of the House or most of them or some of them decided to destroy the structures of the town council. No more council elections, no more town councillors, therefore no accountability in the running of those councils and then what happened after that? All the experienced people who were in those town councils got removed progressively. So over time, the town councils all over Fiji, not only the Labasa Town Council, became shadows of their former self. As a result of that, we now have a situation where reports are outdated and it is something that

the other side of the House will have to inherit as a legacy, as part of their running of government.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of that, I believe all the necessary controls that are required in a town council, basic things like collection of rates became neglected. If you look across all the town councils in Fiji, without exception, the rates are excessively high in terms of arrears. Like I said, Sir, if it ain't broke, do not try and fix it.

In terms of the Report on the Labasa Town Council, I do support the issues raised in the Report and support the need for continued examination of areas that require infrastructure improvement, but let me just say, Mr. Speaker, and before I sit down, this side of the House will fix improvement, but let me just say, Mr. Speaker, and before I sit down, this side of the House will fix the ageing accounts problem.

The Public Accounts Committee, working in tandem with the honourable Minister, are trying to put in place measures so that we ensure that when these younger Members visiting today come to this House, they will no longer have to discuss reports in seven years or over. They will be discussing current information. There is a concerted effort to fix the issues. I am quite confident that when the reports do come to the House, you will discover the catch-up that has taken place. You even have town councils like Rakiraki that right now are actually current in terms of their accounts. Mr. Speaker, once again, we are cleaning up the mess from this side of the House.

HON. J. USAMATE.- Hogwash!

HON. M.S.N. KAMIKAMICA.- The outdated reports that we are now seeing and getting tired of will become a thing of the past.

HON. I.S. VANAWALU. - Mr. Speaker, the Committee noted the constructive, likewise destructive contribution by the honourable Members during the debate on this Review Report; the 2018 Labasa Town Council. I take this opportunity to thank the Special Administrator, the Acting Chief Executive Officer and the staff of Labasa Town Council for their commitment, dedication and unwavering support. These have been instrumental in successfully running the operation of Labasa Town Council.

On that note, Sir, I support the motion before the House.

MR. SPEAKER.- 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 thank you all for your contributions today. Parliament will now adjourn until tomorrow at 9.30 a.m.

The Parliament adjourned at 4.43 p.m.

**ANNEXURE I**

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**Reply to Written Question No. 11/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport (Ref. Page 359-360)**

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**MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS, METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES AND TRANSPORT**  
**(Hon. Ro F.Q. Tuisawau)**

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Reply to Question No. 11/2026 is as follows:

Mr. Speaker, please find below the details of the Ministry capital budget approved against budget utilisation rate from the last three financial years. This also includes our Corporate Statutory Authorities.

<b>Years</b>	<b>Approved Budget</b>	<b>Utilisation Rate Delivered on Time</b>
2022-2023	\$344 million	82 percent
2023-2024	\$511 million	98 percent
2024-2025	\$458 million	90 percent

Those projects not delivered on time were due to external and environmental factors, procurement and contracting delays, regulatory and approval delays and some design changes and scope variations.

## ANNEXURE II

Reply to Written Question No. 12/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Public Enterprises and Multi-Ethnic Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Arts (Ref. Page 360)



**MINISTER FOR PUBLIC ENTERPRISES AND MULTI-ETHNIC AFFAIRS, CULTURE,  
HERITAGE AND ARTS**  
(Hon. C.J. Singh)

Reply to Question No. 12/2026 is as follows:

- (a) The milling figures for rice production over the last five years, the following data is provided:

TOTAL NATIONAL RICE PRODUCTION		TOTAL RICE PRODUCTION FOR FIJI RICE PTE LIMITED	
Year	Production (Tonnes)	Year	Production (Tonnes)
2020	9,219.96	2020	1,322
2021	10,737.75	2021	1,276
2022	13,355.97	2022	1,685
2023	6,724	2023	1,098
2024	8,597.50	2024	1,301

- (b) Mr. Speaker, I will address this part of the question in two parts. Firstly, it is important to recognise that Fiji Rice Limited is primarily a milling entity whose core function is the efficient processing of paddy rice. Secondly, the company relies on the Ministry of Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar for extension and technical support, while the production of rice rests with our farmers. Therefore, any incentive framework to strengthen the rice industry must necessarily be cross-sectoral and coordinated across the relevant agencies.

Plans for Ministry of Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar Industry:

- Improve productivity through improved varieties, seed purification and breeding.
- Expand rice production into new areas, including sugarcane belts for crop diversification.
- Invest in infrastructure (irrigation, roads, storage, milling).
- Support mechanisation to address labour shortages.
- Strengthen technology adoption and best practices.
- Implement policy interventions and public-private partnerships.
- Conduct market demand and consumer preference surveys.
- Implement 10-Year Rice Expansion Plan (2027-2036).

Plans for Fiji Rice Pte Limited:

- Fiji Rice Limited (FRL) and in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Waterways and Sugar Industry (MoAWSI) and key stakeholders, has put in place several targeted plans and incentives to improve rice production and reduce reliance on imports.
- Efforts are being made to expand farmer participation by collaborating with key stakeholders, including Fiji Sugar Corporation to mobilise and engage up to 2,500 farmers. This initiative targets an average supply of one tonner per farmer, particularly from new and smallholder participants, while also promoting rice cultivation in suitable cane and fallow land areas.

- There is strong focus on scaling up commercial farmer output. This involves working closely with MoAWSI and existing commercial farmers who are currently supplying more than 20 tonnes. Assessments are being undertaken on land capacity, irrigation access, mechanisation, and expansion potential, including opportunities for double-cropping and improved farm management practices.
- Targeted support is being provided to commercial farmers through strengthened support packages. These include improved seed varieties, mechanised land preparation, harvesting support, fertiliser and agronomic guidance, as well as irrigation and drainage assistance. In addition, performance-based incentives are being introduced to encourage higher productivity and yields.
- FRL is working with cooperatives supported by iTaukei Land Trust Board to unlock larger contiguous land areas for rice production.

Tabulated below are the specifics of the assistance provided:

Assistance provided to farmers:

<b>ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY MoAWSI</b>	
Material Inputs	Provision of certified seeds, specific agro-chemicals (urea, muriate of potash, SSP), and small farming machinery (rice reapers, threshers, mist blowers).
Technical Assistance	Agronomic training, pest/disease management protocols, soil testing services and strategic crop planning
Extension Services	Farmer field schools, on-site demonstration plots and continuous knowledge transfer via extension officers
Mechanisation Support	Distribution of tractors, harvesters and equipment
MoAWSI Funding Provision	Increased from \$79,000 (2020-21) to \$2.7 million (2025-26)
Eligibility Criteria	Farm Status: Requires legally titled land or valid land consent. Geographical Scope: Area must be deemed suitable for rice cultivation. Technical Eligibility: Must have access to reliable water sources and land preparation capacity.

<b>ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY FRL</b>	
Paddy Pricing Structure	Fiji Rice Limited maintains a tiered pricing system based on paddy quality (moisture content): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Grade Paddy (Moisture level below 15.4 percent) - \$1,000 per tonne.</li> <li>• B Grade Paddy (Moisture level between 15.4 percent and 21.4 percent) - \$800 per tonne</li> </ul> This pricing structure incentivizes farmers to maintain quality standards and adopt proper post-harvest practices.
Financial Support Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Grant:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Total allocation of \$300 per acre</li> <li>○ 80 percent funded as grant, with 20 percent farmer contribution</li> <li>● Fertilizer and Weedicide Grant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide to assist farmers in improving crop yield and reducing input cost burden.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Harvest and Collection Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Free Paddy Pickups from farm gates</li> <li>● Drainage Assistance through in-field drains to improve water management and crop productivity.</li> </ul>
Mechanisation and Operational Support	<p>Farmers are supported through Fiji Rice Limited's machinery at subsidized rates, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Harvesters</li> <li>● Tractors</li> <li>● Excavators</li> </ul> <p>This support reduces operational costs and improves efficiency in land preparation and harvesting.</p>
Extension Services	<p>Extension services are provided to enhance farmer knowledge, improve farming practices and ensure compliance with best agronomic standards.</p>

(c) Mr. Speaker, Sir, for this part of the question, we rely on the Ministry of Agriculture for the national data on rice production. However, it is important to note that the accuracy of these figures can sometimes be contested, as there is currently no formal system to weigh paddy harvested in the fields, particularly for farmers who do not supply their produce to Fiji Rice Limited. In most cases, total production is estimated based on the area planted and the average yield per hectare. In contrast, paddy supplied to Fiji Rice Limited is properly cleaned and weighed at the mill.

Year	Total Production (Tonnes)	Supplied to FRL (Tonnes)	Milled by FRL(%)	Milled by Farmers/other private millers
2020/2021	9,219.96	1,276	13.8	86.2
2021/2022	10,737.75	1,685	15.6	84.4
2022/2023	13,355.97	1,098	8.2	91.8
2023/2024	6,724	1,301	19.3	80.7
2024/2025	8,597.5	1,653	19.2	80.8

## ANNEXURE III

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**Reply to Written Question No. 13/2026 tabled by the honourable Minister for Health and Medical Services (Ref. Page 360)**


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**MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES**  
(Hon. Dr. Ratu A.R. Lalabalavu)

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Reply to Question No. 13/2026 is as follows:

- (a) Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry has decentralised budget allocations to its 14 Cost Centres which is controlled by Heads of Cost Centres (HoCC) such as Medical Superintendents and Divisional Medical Officers. This means that Heads of Cost Centres are responsible for managing their budgets through payment of salaries, wages, overtime and related allowances for their staff.

When Heads of Cost Centres exhaust their overtime budget allocation, they are advised to implement Time Off-In Lieu (TOIL).

At this stage, a total of 8 out of 14 Cost Centres have exhausted their overtime budget and these include the CWM and Labasa Hospitals, both specialised hospitals of Saint Giles and Tamavu Twomey Hospital and the four Divisions of Central, Eastern, Western and Northern Health Services.

The Ministry was allocated a total overtime budget of \$7.5 million for both Established Staff and GWEs. The current expenditure until last pay is approximately \$9.9 million, overspent by \$2.4 million (131.6 percent).

Summary	Annual Budget	Actuals	Budget Balance	Utilisation (%)
SEG 1 Overtime	5,653,000	7,572,170	-1,919,170	133.9
SEG 2 Overtime	1,878,000	2,334,890	-456,890	124.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,531,000</b>	<b>9,907,061</b>	<b>-2,376,061</b>	<b>131.6</b>

All overtime for both Established and GWEs for the Ministry has been fully paid up to December 2025 while approved overtime on TOIL has been accumulating from January 2026 till to-date.

The unpaid overtime from January till March 2026 for the Ministry is approximately \$1.7 million.

Summary	Amount
SEG 1 – Established Staff	\$1,083,163.83
SEG 2 – GWEs	\$407,072.96
	\$1,490,236.79
FNPF (10 percent)	\$149,023.68
<b>Total Gross</b>	<b>\$1,639,260.47</b>

This unpaid overtime amount is expected to increase as unpaid overtime information for a few major Cost Centres are yet to be included.

The above unpaid overtime cost is for officers entitled for Overtime on Band E and below plus Registered Nurses, Medical Imaging Technologists (MITs) and Senior Pharmacy Technicians (SPT) on Band F that have worked overtime but could not be paid due to insufficient overtime budget.

- (b) Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry does not refer emergency patients to private facilities, in fact, it is the other way around.