



# Churches attack

By LITIA CAVA

TWO major faith-based organisations which run a number of schools in the country have joined forces to openly criticise Government on its decision to appoint school heads based on open merit recruitment and selection (OMRS) guidelines.

Methodist Church in Fiji

president the Rev Dr Epineri Vakadewavosa and the head of the Catholic Church of Fiji, Archbishop Peter Loy Chong say the Education Ministry must add faith-based merit criteria to its OMRS system.

Mr Vakadewavosa said the displacement of preferred candidates for leadership positions prevented church schools from providing quality educa-

tion and undermined human and constitutional rights.

"We have lost key school positions held previously by our own members, along with the expected diligence in our institutions for Methodist education and nurturing.

"The school system already fails to sustain students in their faith, the society's ills highlighted by the police, cor-

rections and health services are testimony to the harm ultimately caused.

"The school leaders are the ones who decide what is done in school in religious matters," he said.

Archbishop Chong said as part of the consultation with his advisers, the Archdiocese considered civil disobedience which would include an open-

## Dialogue vital, says Rabuka

By LITIA CAVA

SUCCESSIVE governments since independence have had a mutually productive, co-operative and cordial relationship with religious bodies running educational institutions, says Opposition Leader Sitiveni Rabuka.

In a statement issued this week, Mr Rabuka said this was done through dialogue, mutual respect and understanding.

Last week, representatives from faith-based schools around the country met Education Ministry permanent secretary Alison Burchell where the head of the Catholic Church in Fiji, Archbishop Peter Loy Chong, made a proposal on behalf of religious organisations to add the faith-based merit criteria to Government's open merit based recruitment and selection guideline.

Mr Rabuka said the request made by Archbishop Chong for dialogue with Government on the open merit recruitment of head of schools was a genuine one which needed to be addressed with sensitivity and in good faith.

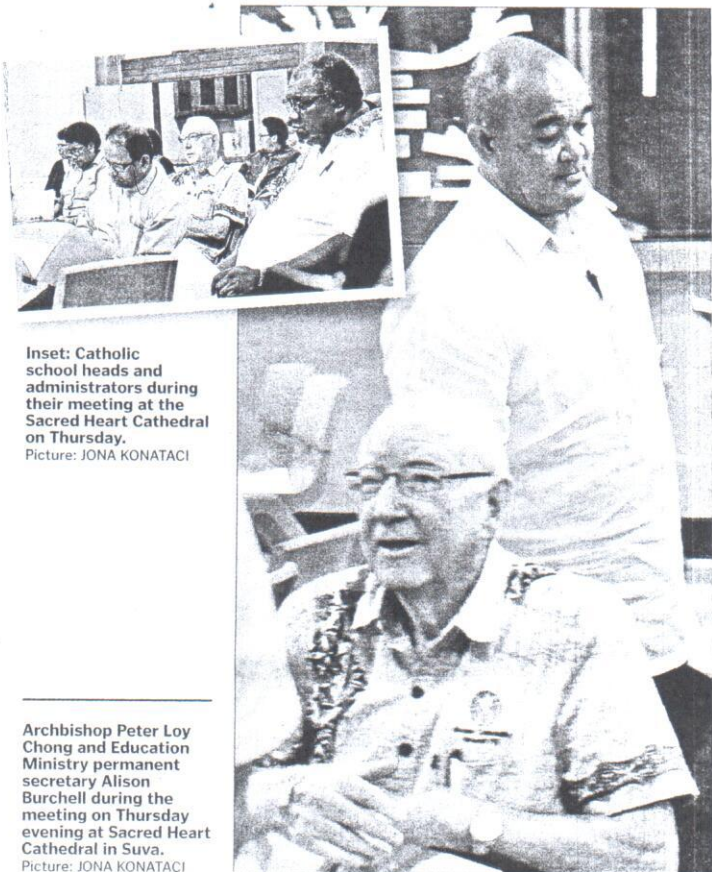
"The request is nothing to do with human rights or discrimination against any person," he said.

"It is a matter of principle and genuine occupational requirement given the nature of these schools, which are faith-based."

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**TODAY:** For Vanua Levu, Taveuni and nearby smaller islands, Lau, Lomaiviti, Yasawa, Kadavu and eastern half of Viti Levu: Occasional showers with isolated heavy falls and thunderstorm. Showers possibly increasing to rain and becoming frequent and heavy with squally thunderstorms.

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**Inset: Catholic school heads and administrators during their meeting at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Thursday.**  
Picture: JONA KONATACI

**Archbishop Peter Loy Chong and Education Ministry permanent secretary Alison Burchell during the meeting on Thursday evening at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Suva.**  
Picture: JONA KONATACI

## Displacement of school heads upsets unions

By LITIA CAVA

THE Fiji Teachers Union (FTU) and the Fijian Teachers Association (FTA) say they are not happy with the way the Education Ministry continues to displace heads of schools.

According to the two teacher unions, the result of promoting teachers into leadership positions based on the open merit recruitment and selection (OMRS) system was "horrifying".

FTU general secretary Agni Deo Singh claimed the job evaluation exercise (JEE), which was implemented in 2017, determined the value of the various levels of jobs which civil servants were carrying out.

He said when the result of the JEE was determined, it revealed that about 2000 teaching positions out of about 11,000 attracted an upward adjustment of more than 15 per cent in salary.

Mr Singh claimed that once the Ministry of Civil Service realised that the 2000 teaching posts were attracting more than 15 per cent salary adjustments, the ministry decided that the posts be re-advertised, though a large number of teachers in those positions had been duly promoted and had been confirmed on the

job for a number of years yet no questions were raised on their performance or qualifications.

He claimed that the result of this exercise showed that majority of the teachers who had been performing well and had proven record of performance were unsuccessful in taking up vacant posts.

Mr Singh claimed the only determining factor for teacher promotions was now a three-hour job test.

FTA general secretary Paula Manumanunitoga said the morale of teachers had been affected because of the JEE and claimed teachers had been unhappy especially those in leadership positions.

Mr Manumanunitoga said the repercussion of the JEE would be felt continuously in the education sector.

The two teacher unions stated that they had nothing against those who had been appointed into the vacant positions because they were all victims of the job evaluation exercise. During a meeting with Catholic schools stakeholders on Thursday night, Education Ministry permanent secretary Alison Burchell reiterated that the appointment of all school heads would be based on merit alone.



**Singh.**  
Picture: FILE



**Manumanunitoga.**  
Picture: FILE

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