

'Impossible to maintain 2m rule'

Singh on schools seating set-up

By ANISH CHAND

By LITIA CAVA

It will be impossible to maintain the two-metre social distancing of students in classrooms and COVID-19 cases will continue to be recorded in schools.

This, according to Education Minister Premila Kumar.

During a ministerial brief on Wednesday, she said the ministry was working to ensure classrooms were properly ventilated.

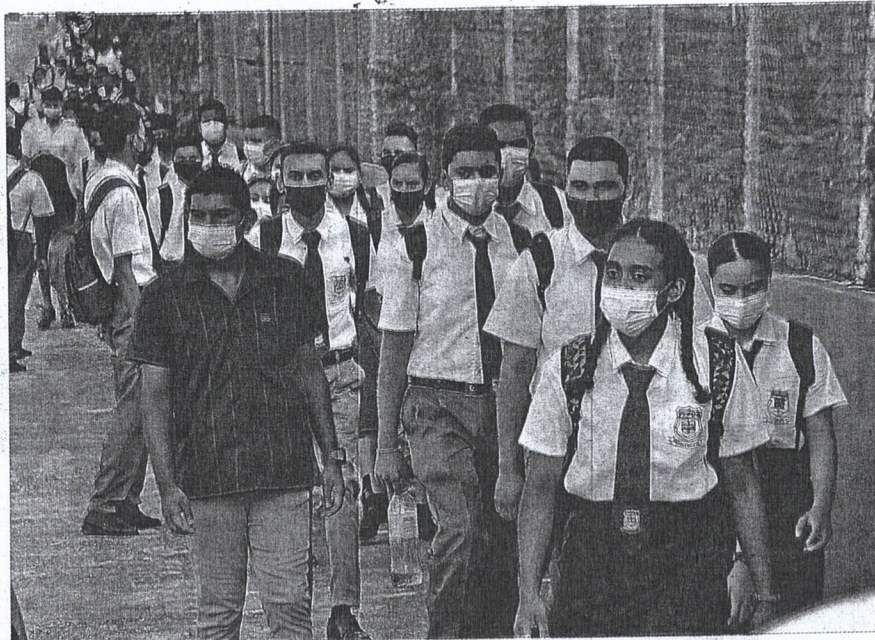
"We expect COVID cases in schools and that is global," she said.

"For social distancing of two metres. We know it is not possible, we have to make sure all the other measures are strictly enforced."

"We have to follow those protocols and when it comes to the social distancing of two metres, it's all about overcrowding and making sure that ventilation, the air circulates."

"So, for that, we have fans installed and the windows are there."

"We have cross-ventilation because the windows are on both sides, unlike many countries which are multi-storied and because of Occupational Health and Safety Requirement (OHS) requirement, the windows are sealed, that is not the situation in Fiji so cross-ventilation is here, the fans will be installed and we are making sure that all the measures are fully in place."



Students of Rishikul Sanatan College after school in Nasinu. It will be hard to maintain social distancing in schools, says minister Premila Kumar. Picture: SOPHIE RALULU

THE Fiji Teachers Union (FTU) says this is not the right time for Education Minister Premila Kumar to advocate how classrooms should be set up.

FTU secretary-general Agni Deo Singh was responding to reports that Mrs Kumar wanted changes in the set-up of Class One classrooms.



Agni Deo Singh. Picture: RAMA

She said in Ba last week, the sitting arrangements were "military-style" and students needed to be seated in a circular formation to allow for more interaction.

"The minister forgets that we are now besieged by COVID-19 in the society and also in schools and here she is advocating for a sitting arrangement that her ministry itself doesn't want," said Mr Singh.

"The COVID-19 circular from the ministry clearly states students have to be seated one metre apart and here is the minister advocating that students sit in a circular manner."

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