

# 'Superspreader' event

## Move by Education Ministry a breach of protocol, says Singh

BY FELIX CHAUDHARY

FIJI Teachers Union general secretary Agni Deo Singh says schools organising for parents to pick up hard copies of worksheets were setting the stage for a COVID-19 superspreader event.

He made the comment

in a letter to Education Ministry permanent secretary Dr Anjeela Jokhan on Friday.

Mr Singh said the union had received numerous complaints from members in containment areas about the high probability of exposure to infection from the physical distribution of hard copies of

worksheets.

"The collection of hard copies by parents and students, and then returning the same to schools on a weekly basis will mass movement of thousands of parents and students," he said in the letter.

"We believe this is a direct breach of MoH (Ministry of Health) advice to

minimise movement.

"As Dr Fong (Health Ministry permanent secretary) and his team repeatedly emphasise 'If you move, the virus moves'," he added.

"Considering that the Central Division is widely and densely infested with the infection, this exercise could turn into another

'superspreader' if we fail to take necessary precaution."

Mr Singh also said the worksheet themselves could very well be conveyers of the virus.

He suggested that for schools in the containment areas online mode be used to disseminate worksheets and if there

were no other options then government agencies such as the National Disaster Management Office, police and Republic of Fiji Military Forces could assist.

Questions sent to Education Ministry permanent secretary Ms Jokhan on Friday and again yesterday on the issue remain unanswered.

## Parents struggle for study resources

By WAISALE KOROIWASA

WHILE people in urban areas find it relatively easy to obtain school notes and exercises via the internet or from schools, people in the Naitasiri area are struggling to keep their children on par in terms of studies.

Solomoni Laukoko said it was hard to obtain materials for his kids because they did not have electricity or a smartphone.

"I live on the farm with my children and they go to school in Suva. We don't have power and our phone is just the press button one, so I don't know how my kids will access the learning material," he said.

Sanaila Rasekaseka of Waidrauso settlement said the long school break had affected his grandchildren.

"My granddaughter attends Dilkusha Primary and she has forgotten her teacher's name," he said.

Liti Qalobula, a farmer's wife in Waibau, said the headteacher of a school attended by her two granddaughters called her regarding the children's school work.

"He told us to get it through Viber, we don't even know what is Viber or messenger," she said.



Kuini Sailiku (right) sells her farm produce in Sawani.  
Picture: WAISALE KOROIWASA

## Call to retain level of taxes, duties

By ANISH CHAND

THE Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association (FHTA) is asking Government to maintain the current level of taxes and duties for at least the next three years.

In its national budget submission, CEO Fantasha Lockington said the tourism industry must first survive the current crisis.

"Our focus is on recovery and revitalisation," she said.

"When tourism is on its feet again, the Fijian economy rebounds."

"But this means that Fiji needs to have all its available products and services ready to welcome back visitors, including the different accommodation options, activities, transport systems, tours and supply lines which are now either closed or struggling to stay open".

FHTA said pre-COVID, the tourism sector was responsible for bringing in more than 40 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings and was a major tax contributor. Almost 16 months after borders closed, SME businesses that form the core of the tourism industry are closed and cash-strapped, with many hanging on by a thread, said FHTA.



Lockington.

Picture: SUPPLIED

## Overcrowding concern at hospital

By LUKE RAWALAI

HEALTH Ministry permanent secretary Dr James Fong says they are trying to resolve overcrowding at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital as the Central Division continues to record increasing numbers of COVID-19 cases.

Responding to queries from this newspaper, he also said they were having issues with mortuary space.

"We are struggling with mortuary space and looking at options now," he said.

Yesterday, the ministry issued an advisory and called on members of the public who had deceased relatives to arrange for the interment of loved ones.

"Due to the mortuary now being utilised to full capacity, the concerned relatives are kindly requested to make immediate arrangements for the uplifting of the deceased from the mortu-

ary, and the performance of final funeral rites for your loved ones," the advisory read.

"To make the necessary arrangements, please contact the Suva Morgue Services on phone number 3310177 or email: suvafuneral@connect.com.fj."

Dr Fong did not respond to queries from *The Fiji Times* about the holding capacity of the mortuary. Last year, Suva Funeral Directors Ltd morgue manager Lanieta Cakacaka told this newspaper that

the facility could hold 40 bodies at a time.

She said since they took over operations in 2013 they had brought in 20 containers which could hold 24 bodies.

On average, Ms Cakacaka said the facility could hold 30 bodies a week.

Questions sent to the Fiji Corrections Service to ascertain whether they had experienced an influx in funerals over the past few weeks remain unanswered.

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