



MINISTER FOR MULTI ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND SUGAR INDUSTRY

Hon. Charan Jeath Singh

Welcome Speech - On the occasion of 145th Girmit Day
Commemoration

13th May 2024 at 10.00 hrs

- **The Chief Guest – His Excellency Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere, President of the Republic of Fiji and Madam Filomena Katonivere**
- **Acting Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Hon. Viliame Gavoka and Mrs. Gavoka.**
- **The Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Hon. Siromi Turaga**
- **Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration, Hon. Pio Tikoduadua**
- **Minister for Public Works, Transport and Meteorological Services, Hon. Ro Filipe Tuisawau**
- **Assistant Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Hon. Alitia Bainivalu**
- **Assistant Minister for Agriculture – Hon. Tomasi Tunabuna**

- **Chairperson of the 145th Girmit Organising Committee and Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection – Hon. Sashi Kiran**
 - **Members of the Diplomatic Corp**
 - **Permanent Secretaries**
 - **Our Religious Leaders and Chairman of Girmit Council, Mr. Selwa Nandan**
 - **Distinguished Delegates, School Students,**
 - **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
 - **And those watching the program through the digital platform in Fiji and abroad,**
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Bula Vinaka, Namaste,

1. It is with great pleasure and privilege that we have the honor to witness the presence of our Chief Guest this morning, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Fiji. Excellency and Madam, thank you for taking your valuable time to be present here as our Chief Guest for this important event.
2. Our President is no stranger to multiculturalism or the descendants of the Girmitiyas as he hails from Labasa, the Friendly North, a famous a sugarcane farms and agriculture,

which has a very rich multi-cultural society, where all the races of people live side-by-side together in a friendly atmosphere, sharing each other culture and traditions.

3. His Excellency is well versed with the culture and tradition of the Girmit descendants and the life, growing up in the sugarcane plantations. Also being a farmer, he has exceptional understanding and respect for the values of social-cohesion and the benefits of it to the society like ours.
4. I wish to pay tribute to the Acting Prime Minister who has supported me from Friday, firstly being the Chief Guest at the 1st Sugar Industry Stakeholder Workshop and later his gracious presence at the opening of the Girmit Day event; thank you Hon. Gavoka and all the other Cabinet Ministers present here, for taking out your valuable time on the occasion of the 145th Girmit Day Commemoration.
5. I also welcome and thank the Members of the Diplomatic Corps for accepting our invitation and making your presence here today.

6. Our teachers and students, who have taken time out of their holidays to be part of this Girmit Day Commemoration event, thank you for supporting us and bringing the future leaders here.
7. I also welcome the people of Western Division, for being part of this event. I am sure you had a wonderful time last two days and night - enjoying the beautiful atmosphere of the Girmit Mela with food, music, entertainment and various exhibitions. I am sure you all are looking forward to enjoying the festivities of the final day today.
8. At this juncture, let me first acknowledge the dedication and commitment given by the 2024 Girmit Organising Committee in planning and executing this years' National event in Lautoka. In saying this, I am very appreciative of the Chairperson of the 2024 Girmit Committee, Hon. Sashi Kiran - Assistant Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection - for her leadership in preparations towards leading up to this event.

9. I also pay tribute to the Lautoka Girmit Working Committee led by Mr. Selwa Nandan for his contribution towards this event. I know a lot of effort has been put up by all of you to ensure that everything was in order for the event to commence. I am really proud of all your time, commitment and efforts.
10. Girmit Commemoration has a lot of significance. It is the time to remember and commemorate the sufferings that our forefathers went through, a time to reflect on the past, ensuring that their struggles and sacrifices are not forgotten.
11. It is more a collection of memories for some, and for others on the other hand, Girmit commemoration is a time to move on from the past and think of the future. For them, Girmit is part of their lives and they will keep it a moment in history, and march on to achieve greater heights and make a name for them, their family members and the beloved nation, Fiji as we see how almost all have done.
12. I believe that the best way to commemorate Girmit is to recollect its significance, and how it has allowed us to

contribute to our personal and professional growth and to the development of our beloved nation.

13. The Girit Descendants have contributed in many ways in the development of Fiji and will continue to contribute Fiji's to development.

14. Given the fact that the Girit Descendants have contributed tremendously to prosperity of Fiji, their unwavering commitment to inclusiveness and adoptability to multiracialism and multiculturalism cannot go unrecognised. They symbolise people who are more than willing to unite and take Fiji to greater heights as they have done since 1879.

15. In conclusion, I wish to state that as descendants of the Giritmityas we have contributed a lot to this beloved nation. And in return, the Fiji has also given us many opportunities to prove ourselves to succeed in so many fields.

16. On the occasion of Girit Day commemoration and keeping aligned with the theme – *the Journey of Girit Descendants in Building a New Fiji* - as descendent of Giritmityas, we offer our commitment to this nation with open arms. I

am sure all of us have the same commitment and vision for our beloved nation.

17. Once again, I wish thank you all for being part of this important event. I wish to specially thank our Chief Guest, His Excellency the President of Fiji and Madam Katonivere for the love and support given to all citizens of our beautiful multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

18. To the people of the Western Division, I am sure all of you have enjoyed the festivities for the last two days. There are more things to enjoy today, so please make the most of it. Your support, commitment and the beautiful parade that you showcased and floats has indeed inspired us all.

19. Once again, I thank all of you for making the journey of the descendants of Girmityas a memorable and successful one and I thank each and every one of you for being part of our program for the last three days.

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