

146th Girmit Commemoration Subrail Park, Labasa 10th – 12th May, 2025

Theme: Preserving the Past,
Envisioning the Future



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMEMORATING GIRMIT IN FIJI

The term "Girmit" originates from a distorted pronunciation of the English word "Agreement." It refers to the system of indentured labour established under British colonial rule. Consequently, the term "Girmitiya" was used to describe the Indians who, between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, left India under these agreements to work in British colonies. Between 1879 and 1916, approximately 60,537 arrived in Fiji. When the indenture system was abolished in 1916, many chose to remain, making Fiji their home.

The Girmitiyas travelled the seas or the *kala pani* across many miles to reach Fiji. They endured the toss and roll of the ship, lived in cramped conditions, and they suffered under scorching heat of the tropics. The insecurity and the pain were all traumatic when they arrived in Fiji to face a new reality. They had come in search of money and opportunities for prosperity - once in Fiji they would have to earn money and seek opportunities, both in very difficult circumstances.

On the sugarcane plantations, the Girmitiyas endured conditions akin to slavery, suffering under the oppressive rule of British overseers. Yet, their unwavering resilience and determination enabled them to withstand these hardships. Their sacrifices and struggles remain an indelible part of Fiji's history. Recognizing this legacy, Fiji's Coalition Government, which took office in 2022, has reaffirmed its commitment to honoring the Girmitiyas. As part of this pledge, Girmit Day has been officially observed as a public holiday for the past three years. This national recognition pays tribute to the invaluable contributions of the Girmitiyas and their descendants to Fiji's economic and cultural development.

This year, the Ministry of Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry will host the National Girmit Commemoration event from 10th to 12th May 2025 at Subrail Park in Labasa. This marks the 146th anniversary of the arrival of the first Indian indentured laborers in Fiji. Hosting this event in the Northern Division will provide an opportunity for the people there to participate in the celebrations, just as those in the Central Division in 2023, and the Western Division last year when the main event was held in Lautoka's Girmit Centre.

The theme for this year's commemoration, ***Preserving the Past, Envisioning the Future***, carries profound significance. ***Preserving the Past*** acknowledges the struggles, sacrifices, and enduring contributions of the Girmitiyas. Their perseverance laid the foundation for the resilience, economic progress, and cultural heritage of the Indo-Fijian community. ***Envisioning the Future*** highlights the need for unity, reconciliation, and progress. As Fiji moves forward, this theme serves as a call to draw lessons from history to build a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous nation. It reinforces the idea that the struggles of the Girmitiyas were not solely an Indo-Fijian experience but an integral part of Fiji's collective history, strengthening the bonds among all ethnic communities.



SATURDAY 10th MAY



DAY PROGRAMME

09:00 AM	Float procession commences
09:40 AM	Float procession arrives at Subrail Park Guests to be seated
10:00 AM	Arrival of the Chief Guest – His Excellency, Ratu Naiqama Tawakecolati Lalabalavu, The President of the Republic of Fiji
10:05 AM	National Anthem
10:20 AM	Ligting of Diya & Prayers (Christian/Hindu/Islam)
10:30 AM	Welcome Performance
10:45 AM	Welcome Address and Introduction of the Chief Guest by Hon. Charan Jeath Singh, Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry
11:00 AM	Address by the Chief Guest- His Excellency, Ratu Naiqama Tawakecolati Lalabalavu, The President of the Republic of Fiji
11:20 AM	Cultural Performance
11:35 AM	Presentation of Awards to Girmit Descendants
12:05 PM	Group Photo
12:15 PM	Oratory by Students
12:45 PM	Presentation of Awards to Orators
12:55 PM	Vote of Thanks & Presentation of Gift
1:00 PM - 4:00 PM	Entertainment Programme by FBC

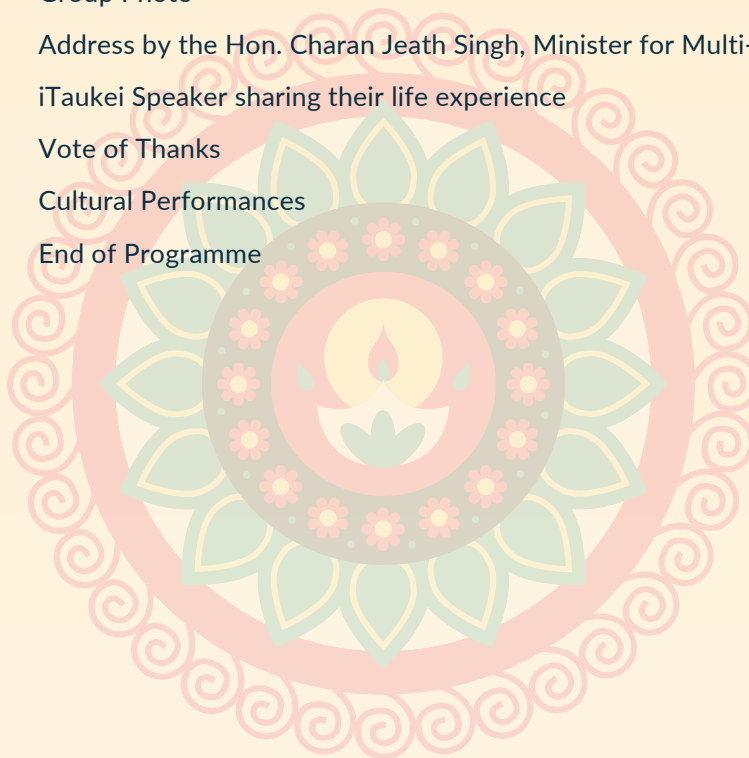




SATURDAY 10th MAY

MULTI-ETHNIC CULTURAL NIGHT PROGRAMME

06:45 PM	All Guests to be seated
07:00 PM	Arrival of the Chief Guest - Hon. Manoa Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications
07:05 PM	Welcome and Garland
07:10 PM	Lighting of Diya
07:15 PM	Welcome Performance
07:30 PM	Welcome Address and Introduction of the Chief Guest
07:45 PM	Address by the Chief Guest - Hon. Manoa Kamikamica, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications
08:05 PM	Presentation of Awards to Girmit Descendants
08:35 PM	Group Photo
08:45 PM	Address by the Hon. Charan Jeath Singh, Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry
09:00 PM	iTaukei Speaker sharing their life experience
09:15 PM	Vote of Thanks
09:25 PM	Cultural Performances
10:30 PM	End of Programme





SUNDAY 11th MAY



DAY PROGRAMME

01:00 PM - 04:00 PM

Entertainment Programme by FBC

INDIAN CLASSICAL NIGHT PROGRAMME

06:45 PM

All Guests to be seated

07:00 PM

Arrival of the Chief Guest - Hon. Prof. Biman Prasad, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics

07:05 PM

Welcome and Garland

07:10 PM

Lighting of Diya

07:15 PM

Welcome Performance

07:30 PM

Welcome Address and Introduction of the Chief Guest

07:45 PM

Address by the Chief Guest- Hon. Prof. Biman Prasad, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister for Finance and Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics

08:05 PM

Presentation of Awards to Girmit Descendants

- Hon. Prof. Biman Prasad

- Hon. Charan Jeath Singh

08:35 PM

Group Photo

08:45 PM

Address by the Hon. Charan Jeath Singh, Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs and Sugar Industry

09:00 PM

Indian Classical Performance

09:15 PM

Vote of Thanks

09:25 PM

Cultural Performance - Tirkuttu

11:00 PM

End of Programme





MONDAY 12th MAY

DAY PROGRAMME

08:00 AM	March procession commences
08:45 AM	March procession arrives at Subrail Park All Guests to be seated
09:00 AM	Arrival of the Chief Guest - Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka, Prime Minister, and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Services, Information and Public Enterprises
09:05 AM	National Anthem
09:15 AM	Lighting of Diya & Prayers (Christian/Hindu/Islam)
09:25 AM	Welcome Performance
09:40 AM	Welcome Address and Introduction of the Chief Guest
09:50 AM	Address by the Chief Guest- Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka, Prime Minister, and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Civil Services, Information and Public Enterprises
10:10 AM	Address by the Guest of Honor - Shri Pabitra Margherita, Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India
10:25 AM	Presentation of Awards to Girmit Descendants - Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka - Shri Pabitra Margherita Group Photo
10:55 AM	Presentation of Gift
11:00 AM	Chief Guest departs
11:05 AM	Cultural Performance
11:25 AM	Oratory by Students
11:55 AM	Presentation of Awards to Participants
12:15 PM	Vote of Thanks
12:30 PM	Exhibition Tour & End of Official Programme

