

**Address by the High Commissioner on 147<sup>th</sup> Fiji-Girmit Commemorations**  
Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2026, Auckland

Namaskar, Tena Ra Koe, and Good evening to everyone,

It is an honour for me to join you today for the 147th Fiji Girmit Commemorations.

First of all, I would to acknowledge the Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister of New Zealand, and Member of Parliament and former Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji Hon Biman Prasad

Ministers, Members of Parliament, Dignitaries, community leaders, and all members of the Fiji Indian community gathered here today.

Today, we remember the Girmityas the men, women, and children who left India many years ago and travelled across the seas to Fiji under the indenture system. The first ship, the Leonidas, arrived in Fiji on 14 May 1879. Thousands followed in the years after that. They came with hope for a better future, but many faced hardship, suffering, separation from family, and difficult living conditions.

Even during the most difficult times, they kept alive their values, language, faith, culture, music, and traditions. Through hard work and determination, they built new lives for future generations.

Because of their sacrifices, future generations were able to grow, succeed, and contribute to societies across the world including Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, and many other countries.

As we gather here today, we celebrate the rich contribution of the Indo-Fijian community to New Zealand's multicultural society. Your contributions in education, business, public service, arts, culture, and community leadership are deeply valued.

India shares a special and lasting connection with the people of Fiji and with the global Indian diaspora. We are proud of the way Indo-Fijian communities continue to preserve their heritage while also contributing strongly to the countries they now call home.

Events like today are important because they help younger generations understand their history and remain connected to their roots and identity. We must continue to remember the Girmityas—their struggles, their dreams, and their spirit of perseverance. Their journey teaches us important lessons about dignity, humanity, courage and unity.

I congratulate the Fiji-Girmit Foundation New Zealand and its members for organizing the commemoration and bringing the community together in remembrance and celebration. We also appreciate the Government of Fiji for declaring Girmit Day, a national holiday and for continuing to commemorate the occasion every year to honour the contributions and sacrifices of the Girmityas. I also thank the Government of New Zealand for giving this celebration importance, including at the highest level.

Thank you

Namaste & Jai Hind !