



Fijians 'worst sex offenders'

By SOLOMONI BIUMAIONO

FIJIANS are the worst offenders of incest and sexual crimes and marijuana smoking has reached primary school level, a Senate committee says.

The increase in the use of drugs, in sexual crimes and prostitution is a major concern for the Senate ad hoc committee which has been set up to look into these social evils.

Committee member Senator Ponipate Lesavua said their findings were based on statistics provided to them by police and from other reports highlighting these social problems.

SENATE HELPS FIGHT CRIME

"Incest is one area that Fijians have outnumbered most other races," he said. Apart from this, the Senate committee was told primary school students have started smoking marijuana, resulting in a marked increase in the number of drug addicts admitted to the Saint Giles Hospital.

"Even some primary school students have started sniffing glue," Mr Lesavua said.

"Even though they may be experimenting, it is still a prob-

lem." On prostitution, the Senate committee was told that more gay people were getting involved in the local sex industry while Asian immigrants were involved in a professional set-up with an agent who secured clients.

"All these are age-old crimes that have been in existence for a long time," Mr Lesavua said.

"We cannot eradicate it, we can only decrease it."

The Senate committee invited all government departments, churches and civil and welfare

organisations to make submissions to it on the issue.

"We're already receiving written submissions from members of the public about their concerns on the rise of such crimes," Mr Lesavua said.

After the submissions, the committee will tour districts that have become synonymous with marijuana growing, use and other crimes.

Mr Lesavua said the committee was aware of the numerous reports written by ministries and

organisations about these social problems and would be using them as references.

The Senate committee was formed after a resolution was passed in the Upper House in December.

Senate President Taito Waqavakatoga said the Senate could play its part in fighting these crimes.

"The Senate committee will really help recognise these areas and look at the details into how these crimes grow," he said.

The Great Council of Chiefs has also expressed concern over these problems and its effect on indigenous Fijians.

Special prayer for kids

CHRISTIAN institutions around the country had a special message for children returning to school tomorrow.

Yesterday, church elders from the Nadera Methodist Church and school teachers encouraged students to be excited about school.

One church elder said it was important for children to know that a good education would help them in the long run.

Speaking in Fijian, he said a good education would help them get what they wanted in life and face difficulties and challenges and to deal with them.

The children wore their uniforms when they attended the service.

Some of them were so excited that they could not stop walking around in their new uniforms and sandals.

Other Christian institutions around the city held their own services for school children.

More than 215,000 children are expected to return to school tomorrow but teachers will be back at work from today.

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Blessed are the children ... first-timers to school this year at the church service yesterday. □ Picture: RAMA

State CEOs face probe

By SOLOMONI BIUMAIONO

GOVERNMENT chief executive officers are under investigation by the Auditor-General for abuse of travel allowances.

Public Service Commission chief executive officer Anare Jale confirmed a number of CEOs from the 23 government departments would be investigated.

"I have just received the letter from the Auditor-General's Office but I cannot disclose the names of the CEOs just yet," Mr Jale said. "The investigations are still in the preliminary stages. Nothing has been confirmed as yet."

Mr Jale said the Auditor-General, Eroni Vatuloka, had requested files on CEOs' travel details from PSC last year.

He said the investigations did not mean that corruption was rife among the Government's top brass.

He said the investigations were being carried out to safeguard taxpayers' money.

This is the fourth investigation of its kind by the Auditor-General into the financial transactions of top government officials.

The first was against former Minister for Multi-Ethnic Affairs, George Shiu Raj, the second saw the dismissal of Labour CEO Brian Singh and the third was against Cabinet ministers.

Mr Raj has already appeared in court on charges of defrauding the Government with a travel agent while Mr Singh has appealed to the Public Appeals Board against the termination of his contract.

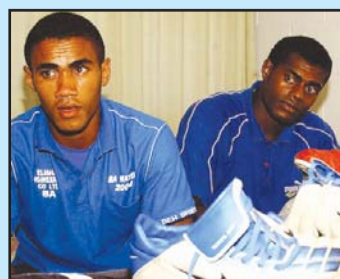
Mr Jale said the Ministry of Finance would investigate Mr Singh for losing government property while in office.

"He would have to answer to charges that government property went missing under his care," he said. The Ministry of Finance said two laptop computers under his charge had gone missing.



TOMORROW

DON'T MISS YOUR POSTER OF VIJAY SINGH IN THE FIJI TIMES. AND ALSO IN SHANTI DUT.



IN SPORTS QUERIES OVER 7s SQUAD