



[COVID-19](#) > [Speeches](#) > STATEMENT BY PM BAINIMARAMA ON COVID-19 [15-05-20]

# STATEMENT BY PM BAINIMARAMA ON COVID-19 [15-05-20]

15/05/2020



Bula vinaka.

Back on the 18th of April, we clinically confirmed our 18th case of COVID-19. This was in the midst of our response to the devastation of severe Cyclone Harold, which had ripped across our islands the week prior, levelling homes and flooding communities.

With two national disasters threatening the lives of Fijians at once, Fiji was faced with a dilemma the likes of which we'd never seen. We declared two simultaneous States of Natural Disaster, kicking off a month-long, whole-of-government campaign to assist those in the path of the storm's wrath without compromising any of our life-saving progress in our war against the coronavirus.



By adapting our cyclone response to the reality of COVID-19, we've saved lives on the frontlines of both existential threats. Even as Fijians evacuated their communities and authorities dispatched to badly-hit regions during TC Harold, not a single case of coronavirus was spread as a result of the storm. And this week, following these achievements, these States of Natural Disaster have not been extended.

If no new cases are recorded tomorrow, that will mark four full weeks without a new case of COVID-19. The experts tell us those 28 days represent two full incubation periods for the coronavirus. That means that over this period, if the virus was passed to any close contacts of our existing patients, our tests would confirm it. Even as we've continued to conduct over 1,000 more tests over these four weeks, every morning, every one of those tests has come back negative. On top of that victory, we're also confirming our 15th full recovery of the virus, meaning only three active cases remain.

Fiji is now well on our way to eliminating COVID-19 entirely, and we're one of the few nations on Earth who can make that claim. Our progress has come not from fortune, but through foresight; every step taken was swift, every decision made was decisive, and every success we've recorded has been well-earned.

But much as this feels like a moment of celebration — as it should — the end of these declarations does not mean Fiji is entirely rid of this virus. We still have Fijians in government funded quarantine facilities who could yet develop the disease. As tight as our safety nets may be — there is always a chance that an asymptomatic case has slipped through undetected. We have no evidence to suggest this is the case, but it is still a risk we must consider, because all it takes is one case, one super-spreader, to provoke a Fijian epidemic of COVID-19.

From the beginning, we've armed ourselves with only the best available medical information. As the medical community's knowledge of this virus has evolved, so has our response. It would be easy for me to stand here today and declare total victory over this virus. It would be easy to say this war has been completely won and roll-back every health protection directive in one fell-swoop. But we can never settle for "easy" with a virus this devastating and unpredictable. We have no choice but to continue treating this invisible enemy with deadly seriousness.

As I speak, China is already seeing a second wave of infections and Europe is bracing for the same. We cannot risk a second wave of Fijian infections; that is why, for the time being, all of our health protection directives will remain in full effect.

The nationwide curfew will remain in effect from 10 pm until 5 am every day. Social gatherings must be limited to 20 people or fewer. Gyms, nightclubs, cinemas and swimming pools will remain

closed, as will houses of worship. Contact sports are still not allowed to be played. Our schools will remain closed as well until the 12th of June 2020. Existing quarantine protocols will remain in place, including for Fijians returning overseas. These repatriating Fijians will immediately enter 14 days of quarantine in government funded facilities. At the end of the 14 day period, if they test negative for the virus, they can complete their remaining 14 days of self-quarantine at home.

In the coming weeks, we will finalise our game plan for a gradual scale-back of some of these measures. But I want to be crystal clear with every person watching: No matter how confident we are that this virus has been defeated, our most critical restrictions aren't going anywhere. The good habits that we've picked up over the past few months — physical distancing, regular handwashing, staying home or wearing face masks when we're sick, not sharing takis and bilos, and keeping a clean working environment — must become new ways of Fijian life. We cannot risk falling back into life-risking bad habits. To keep Fiji healthy, and to prevent a dangerous second wave of the virus, these new healthy habits must stick.

And even as we explore ways we can safely scale back restrictions, we're also stepping up our virus containment. We've already health screened over 800,000 Fijians through the largest healthcare mobilisation campaign in Fijian history, in the coming weeks we will massively step-up testing as well. We are also actively looking at new and innovative ways to prevent a resurgence of the disease.

Under the digitalFIJI initiative, a mobile app called "careFIJI" has been developed that will harness our phones' Bluetooth technology to make any future contact tracing faster, easier, and more effective. And it will do so all while protecting the privacy of the user.

If enough Fijians use careFIJI, we'll be able to avoid large-scale lockdowns entirely. More importantly, widespread adoption of careFIJI will help save lives, bring back jobs, and increase confidence among our tourism and trading partners.

This app comes from the very same technology that has been widely adopted by millions of Singaporeans and Australians in their own fights to contain the virus — meaning that its success will help pave the way to safely re-opening our borders to visitors. When that day comes, tourists will be able to download careFIJI upon landing, giving them the confidence that Fiji has COVID-19 firmly under control.

We're aiming to launch a pilot programme of the app as soon as we get approval from the Android PlayStore and Apple AppStore. We need you — every Fijian listening to this address — to download this app when it's available, just as we need you to continue to adhere to every one of our life-saving directives — because your government cannot win this war alone. Your government cannot make you wash your hands. Your government cannot force you to bring your own bilos to

kava sessions. Your government cannot inspect inside your homes to ensure they are clean. We will continue to give advice and directives led by the best available science, but ultimately, it's up to you to stop the spread. Each of you must choose to make Fiji COVID-free.

Much of the rest of the world is still in the grips of widespread viral outbreaks, meaning the coronavirus-fuelled collapse of the world economy will likely get worse before it begins to relent. Like most other nations Fiji is deeply connected with the rest of the world, and like most other economies, our businesses, industries and citizens have been affected. Early next week, the Minister for Economy will announce the second round of COVID-19 unemployment benefits to be paid out — in partnership with FNPF — to aid those Fijians whose employers have been severely impacted by this crisis. We are also closely monitoring and working with business in various sectors and financial institutions to provide targeted support.

The coronavirus is the challenge of our generation. If our campaign presses onwards to total victory, when the history books recount the difficulty of this period, they will tell of how Fijians led the way in beating this virus for good. And around the world, as the larger war against this virus rages on, I hope our friends and partners can take comfort from what's been achieved in Fiji. The right path isn't always the easy one. But our success has shown that if you respect the science and act decisively, this virus can be beaten. Contact tracing saves lives. Stopping mass gatherings saves lives. Staying home saves lives. Changing behaviour, from how we shop, to how we travel, to how often we wash our hands, all saves lives. Entering patients into quarantine and isolation may not always be easy, but it saves lives as well. And if we want the world to rid itself of this virus, I urge leaders, businesses, and ordinary people to stay the course, do what must be done to avoid needless death and suffering — and instead, set Fiji, and the rest of the global community on the course to health and economic recovery.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you and God bless you all.

## Quick Links

- ▶ [Latest News](#)
- ▶ [digitalFIJI](#)
- ▶ [Fijian Constitution](#)
- ▶ [Tenders & EoI](#)

- ▶ [Government Vacancies](#)



- Speeches
- Government Directory
- Public Awareness

## Contact Us



Ground Floor, New Wing  
Government Buildings  
Suva, Republic of Fiji



+679 3301 806



[news@govnet.gov.fj](mailto:news@govnet.gov.fj)



Mon - Fri: 8am - 5pm

**Submit Feedback**

© Copyright Ministry of Communications 2020. All Rights Reserved.

