



**Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development &  
Statistics – Hon. Professor Biman Prasad**

**201<sup>st</sup> Birth Anniversary (Jayanti) of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati  
February 16, 2025, University of Fiji, Saweni, Lautoka**

1. The President of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji Shree Arun Padarath, other officials, members of the Sabha, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Namaste. I take this opportunity to thank the President of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji Shree Arun Padarath for the invitation.
2. Today, we have gathered here to celebrate the 201st birth anniversary of one of the greatest reformers, thinkers, and spiritual leaders of India—Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati. His contributions to society, education, and the revival of Vedic wisdom continue to inspire generations.
3. His legacy continues through the Arya Samaj, DAV institutions, and millions of followers worldwide. His teachings remain relevant in modern times as our societies still struggle with the issues he fought for. The seeds of Arya Samaj were carried into Fiji by Girmitiyas who were brought into Fiji to work on sugar cane plantations beginning 1879. Their guiding text was Satyarth Prakash - Light of Truth written by Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati. With their vision and dedication, they were able to establish the first Arya Samaj in Samabula, Suva on 25 December 1904. Those who pioneered the formation of Arya

Samaj Babu Mangal Singh, Shri Gaji Pratap Singh, Shri Nanku Sonar, Shri Bihari Lal, Pandit Shiu Datt Sharma, Shri Basdeo Rai, Shri Inayat Hussein, Shri Indra Narayan and Shri Tikaram Verma.

4. Maharshi Dayanand understood that education was the key to social transformation. He promoted Vedic education system based on logic and reasoning; Establishment of Gurukuls (ancient learning centers); and Moral and scientific education instead of rote learning
5. Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji was established in 1918. Thereafter, the Sabha established its first school namely Gurukul Primary School in Saweni in 1918. Today the Sabha currently owns and operates 13 Pre-schools, 14 Primary Schools, six high schools and the University of Fiji.
6. The Coalition government recognizes the contributions of the founders and the management, past and present, of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji to the education sector in Fiji and also more broadly towards the development of human capital.
7. The Government recognizes the role of religious organizations such as the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji and our communities in establishing and managing schools in our communities for over 100 years now. Majority of the schools are managed by faith-based organisations and communities. The Government manages 2 primary schools and 11 secondary schools. This model provides an opportunity for collaboration between the Government and civil society in the provision and delivery of education. It is also an excellent example of government-community partnership to achieve development outcomes, which otherwise may not be possible.

8. The delivery of quality education at all levels is an important focus of the Coalition Government. An educated society is crucial for economic and social progress. Last year, the Coalition Government recently launched a new **National Development Plan**. As a plan for our people, the National Development Plan 2025-2029 has a bold vision – empowering the people of Fiji through unity.
9. Education is one of the main focuses of the new National Development Plan. One of the key goals for the education sector is to provide access to high quality education and relevant education programmes at all levels. Given your role in the education sector in Fiji, our partnership with Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji is a valuable one to achieve the outcomes envisioned in the NDP.
10. As we celebrate the 201st birth anniversary of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati, let us remember his message of truth, courage, and righteousness. His life was dedicated to the upliftment of humanity, and his vision of a just and educated society remains a guiding force. The vision of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji is well captured to enforce the message of Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati - a society where everyone is literate and conforms to acceptable moral, spiritual, cultural and social values.
11. Let us pledge to follow his teachings by embracing empathy, equality, and the pursuit of truth. Only then can we truly honor this great saint and visionary. My best wishes to you all for a successful celebration. Namaste.