



**Remarks by the Acting Deputy Commissioner [FICAC] at the Young Leaders Seminar [YLS]** held on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2025 at Xavier College, Ba.

The Heads of Schools;

Teachers-Educators;

Our esteemed guest presenters;

Head Boys and Head Girls from the different schools as far as Sigatoka and Ra;

Our team from FICAC the Corruption Prevention unit;

To all our participants at this YLS;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning, Bula Vinaka and Namaste.

It is my great pleasure to be part of this momentous occasion today with the theme '**Empowering Young Leaders through Digital Literacy for Anti-Corruption**'.

Before we proceed further, can we all give a big Vinaka Vakalevu to the Head of School of Xavier College and to the school management for allowing us to host this event during these two days at their auditorium.

For those who travelled from afar or woke up early and those who prepared in advance our team, we also thank all of you tremendously for your sacrifice.

Specifically addressing our young leaders for a moment, our head girls and head boys....

Hands up, how many of you are 18 years old or thereabout?

You have something in common with FICAC.

FICAC was born or established in 2007 and we are now 18 years old.

Just like you as head girls and head boys to prefect and look after the students at your school, assist the teachers and principal, taking on more responsibility than what a normal student would expect, our job at FICAC is similar to that but on a national level.

FICAC just like a school prefect, is to ensure that those in public office or employed in a public service, like a police officer or a minister of government, FICAC is to monitor and ensure that they are behaving.

For example, police are supposed to help the public and they are paid by the tax payers to prevent offences, attend to reports and investigate the alleged commission of an offence.

If robbers are trying to break into your house and you call the police to come immediately, the police are not supposed to say or ask for example 'well if you pay us \$50 first, then we will come'.

A teacher in a public school cannot be asking for or receiving bribe in the course of their employment to teach you.

The same principle applies to all other public employees in public bodies, such as a public hospital or public health centre.

Asking for or taking a bribe as a public employee, is one example of corruption.

A citizen or civilian or private company offering or paying a bribe to a public employee such as a police officer, that citizen or civilian can also be in trouble for assisting in the commission of a corruption offence.

Just like a prefect when you report to your teacher or principal if a student is misbehaving, for FICAC we investigate a corruption related complaint and if the complaint is made out, we report or take the case to court and the court will determine what punishment is necessary for the offender.

Corruption is simply when someone uses their public position for private gain.

In all corruption cases, it will not matter, whether \$1 is involved or a \$100.

Or a \$300 plane ticket or a \$300 million dollar jet is offered.

Anything of value that is asked for or received or done by the public employee on account of their position or their normal course of work as a public employee, that is corruption.

Why should you care about corruption? Is it your problem?

At the minimum, I am certain that everyone in this room cares about honesty, the truth and fairness.

For one, Corruption negatively affects these good values and erodes our trust in public officials or public employees and can erode our trust in public institutions which are created to look after the needs of the community.

What is the point of calling the police or an ambulance to attend to an emergency when they only attend if you pay for their breakfast or they prioritise helping their own family or friends first?

Or the police cannot attend to the emergency quickly because the police vehicle has been driven out by a group of police officers for a private picnic.

Public services will become unreliable and only available to the richest or only those who can afford a bribe or the services will be made available only for a select few.

When public funds or resources and public employees are involved, it makes it all our business.

Abraham Lincoln [February 12<sup>th</sup> 1809 – April 15<sup>th</sup> 1865], the 16<sup>th</sup> US President, who was integral in the abolishment of slavery in the US, put it succinctly in one of America's well known speeches:

*...that government of the people, by the people, for the people...*

As young leaders, I want all of us to be strengthened by the knowledge that government or public employees are exactly that, they work for the public or for all of us.

They should not be working for themselves or only a certain select group.

The establishment of FICAC goes towards keeping public employees or government honest.

FICAC has powers to investigate and prosecute a corruption matter in court.

But these is the middle and end process.

The beginning process is equally as important and that is why prevention is also part of FICAC's core duties.

We must all understand and accept another fundamental truth and that is, we cannot eradicate corruption.

As long as bias, greed, ignorance, selfishness exists, corruption will exist.

We may have witnessed these qualities with some even closest to us.

We may have even been guilty of these ourselves.

That does not necessarily make you bad, or a criminal or evil.

Recognizing that these qualities are real and that eradicating corruption is impossible, it is a step towards laying the foundation for us to critically think of and take measures to mitigate or reduce the chances of corruption happening.

Hiring or selecting the right people who have the integrity and a sense of duty to serve the public or to always have the public [and not personal] interest in mind, that can help reduce or prevent corruption.

Reviewing outdated processes or obsolete laws to make it harder for a public officer to commit corruption is another way.

Having regular audits and promoting transparency.

Garnering public support, these are all crucial in the prevention of corruption.

We at FICAC cannot fight corruption alone and the community's help.... your help will be integral.

That is why seminars such as this is very important especially with educators and young leaders. We will hold a similar one with schools in the Northern Division next week.

As head girls and head boys of your schools, you have a lot of influence and a lot of potential.

We are fortunate too that this week, that we remember and celebrate the life of one of Fiji's greatest leader, Ratu Sir Josefa Lalabalavu Vanayaliyali Sukuna [22<sup>nd</sup> April 1888 – 30<sup>th</sup> May 1958].

He went to school not too far from here, at Wairuku Indian School, Ra.

He was the first I- taukei to have graduated with a law degree from London in 1921.

After serving in World War I for the French Foreign Legion, he received the *Croix de guerre* military award [war cross] for courage or gallantry.

Not only was he a war hero, Ratu Sukuna was from a chiefly family in Bau and it was rare in the early 1900s in Fiji to have someone so influential from the indigenous community with a good formal education.

Ratu Sukuna became the de-facto 'go to person' between our early colonial administrators and governors and the indigenous community.

In his professional working career, focused on I-taukei Affairs, he helped lay the ground work for what is now iTLTB which manages I-taukei Land.

It was an outrageous idea at his time and he had to convince a lot of the chiefs to accept the idea of vesting their ancestral land to someone else or to an institution which was alien to them.

For all his work for Fiji, he was knighted for the first time in 1946 and then a second time in 1953.

If you're into fashion, when returning from England, Ratu Sukuna popularised the 'sulu vaka taga'. Which is a tailored version of the 'sulu vaka toga' and which is a staple male dress code for work and formal occasions.

Just like Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, all or most of you may end up working, even heading a public or government institution in the near future.

You can spread the word or create awareness and be good ambassadors and accountable leaders, to fight against corruption.

We have professors or senior educators from renown local tertiary institutions and the ministry of education, the Director of the police Criminal Investigation Department [CID] a very senior police officer with more than 20 years of experience, the Assistant Commissioner of the Online Safety Commission amongst others, whom will be talking to you during the two day seminar.



Our theme, involving Digital Literacy is about equipping us with some of the basics of using, understanding and communicating with the use of a digital device which more often now, is linked online.

For us millennials born well before the year 2000, we still remember a lot of things were done manually back then.

Back then, communicating via a written letter and posting it at the Post Office, was the norm.

Now you just send an email from your phone or laptop.

If you wanted to write an essay, you had to write it on a piece of paper and God forbid you make a big mistake at the end where you end up throwing the whole piece of paper in the rubbish and having to start again from the beginning.

Now, you can type on a computer and just delete or undo a mistake.

Telephones were the size of a school back pack where you had to physically dial the number.

Now you just press a number on your mobile phone. We have not even touched on the apple watch and making and receiving calls from it.

Perhaps everyone in this room may have their own phone, tablet or computer or has easy access to one at home.

With the advancement in technology, we have offenders who have committed corruption related offences through some digital means.

We have had to adapt and FICAC has the best qualified and trained digital forensics professionals in the country where we can for example, obtain information from your phone or computer even if you have deleted it or encrypted it.

During this seminar, please, be a sponge.

Try and absorb as much knowledge as you can from the speakers and facilitators.

They are living, breathing, walking libraries.

Ask questions.

The only bad question is the question that you could have asked, but chose not to.

Take a second, look around you, you have colleagues, head boys and head girls from other schools.

If you have not said hello, take the time during these two days to do that.

You will be presenting in groups at some point, so you will have to meet and talk to each other anyways. So you might as well start socializing early.

Who knows, after finishing school maybe after university, you all may end up working together in government in the future.

You are all smart.

In here, you are all equal.

Don't be so grumpy and unapproachable.

Remember, to smile.

I wish you all the best in this workshop.

Thank you Very much  
Vinaka Vakalevu and  
Daniyevaad

---

Acting Deputy Commissioner – FICAC  
Speech Delivered on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025