

27 June 2022

Delivery: BY Hand and Email

The Permanent Secretary
Office of the Prime Minister
Level 4, New Wing
Government Buildings
SUVA

Attention: Rotuma Desk Officer

Dear Sir

RE: GOUNDAR SHIPPING FRANCHISE

I write as Chairman of the Fiji Rotuman Association (FRA) to seek your assistance and intervention towards the decision by the Goundar Shipping Company on 6 June 2022 to cease all trips to Rotuma and Lau due to the rise in Fuel prices.

This is of great concern to our people as we fully rely on Government to provide shipping services to our people on the island. Of the ten (10) Government franchise shipping routes in Fiji, Rotuma is one of them serviced by Goundar Shipping. The questions I'd like to pose is why are we being victimised when the increase in fuel price is of a global issue? What is Government's stance on the decision made by Goundar Shipping to cease its services to Rotuma? We are not privy to the Franchise Agreement but it appears that Goundar Shipping has the discretion to decide on whether it should or should not run its ships when cost becomes a concern. The hike in fuel price which is the main reason for ceasing the shipping services to Rotuma is beyond our control. It is the obligation of government and Goundar shipping to address any concerns amicably without having to resort to such drastic actions where the livelihood of people is compromised.

I have just returned from Rotuma last week and have noted the shortage of essential items on the island. Shops have run out of fuel, sugar, milk, flour and toiletries to name a few. Of course there is abundance of root crops, veges and sea food, however people rely on essential items for daily use especially the children.

Apart from the shortage of items on the island, a lot of people are waiting to travel to Fiji and vice versa as not everyone can afford to travel by plane.

The Fiji Rotuman Association works closely with the Rotuma Island Council and I am sure that they may have raised their concerns through the District Officer Rotumas' office, however, as the Rotuman body here in Fiji looking after the interests of our Rotumans living outside the island, I am obliged to address this issue with your office.

We humbly seek your intervention in providing a way forward to this issue as we firmly believe that Goundar Shipping should not be allowed to dictate to Government whether or not it will provide services to only certain islands just because it suits them, seeing that it has a binding contract with Government.

It is our humble plea that this matter is resolved at the earliest so that our people are not disadvantaged for too long.

Yours sincerely



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Cc:

- Minister for Commerce, Trade, Tourism & Transport
- Chairman Rotuma Island Council
- District Officer, Rotuma