

FijiFocus



FIJI CHAIRS WORLD
BANK'S SMALL STATES
ROUNDTABLE

3

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8000

FIJIAN
REGISTERED
WITH NATIONAL
EMPLOYMENT
CENTRE



WOMEN
URGED TO
TAKE UP
BOAT MASTERS
TRAINING

13



CLIMATE CHANGE'S SOMBRE REMINDER

PRIME Minister Voreqe Bainimarama shares a light moment at Wainawaqa village after issuing a sombre reminder of the impact of climate change. Fiji continues to undertake adaptation and mitigation measures for communities affected by climate change. Prime Minister Bainimarama commissioned two such adaptation measures in Naitasiri through the Riverbank Protection Projects recently. In commissioning these projects, Prime Minister Bainimarama reminded the villagers of Wainawaqa and Nadakuni of the effects of climate change and the vulnerability of their livelihood. Fiji has been vocal on the need for climate financing to meet the daunting task of adapting to the impacts brought about by climate change.

FULL DETAILS ON PAGE 5.
Photos: ERONI VALILI



\$9.4b for resilience

A-G tells the world of climate action measures

PRASHILA DEVI

FIJI will need close to \$9.4 billion over the next 10 years to be able to build resilience in its infrastructure. Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, speaking at the

Ministerial Finance Dialogue 2 – Mobilizing finance for climate action at the United Nations, New York, said the Fijian Government was already putting in place measures to address this. “Fiji used the World Bank to carry out a climate vulnerability assessment (CVA),

they have put the cost, it will cost approximately \$9.4 billion over the next 10 years to be able to build resilience in our infrastructure,” the A-G said. He said it was important for countries to articulate what their actions are going to be- “on climate action, to be able to cost

it out because once you are able to get that level of analysis and clarity then you will be able to attract a while plethora of financing opportunities”. “Then you can put in place domestic resource mobilisation and Fiji, for example,

CONTINUES ON PAGE 3



INSIDE

JOB CENTRE REGISTERS
8000 FIJIANS 15

HARD WORK PAYS OFF FOR
SINGLE MUM 14

ADDITIONAL PAYMENT
FOR SUGARCANE GROWERS 10

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS 'THE
BIGGEST ISSUE' 7

QUOTE OF THE WEEK



Voreqe Bainimarama

No Fijian should live with the terror of thinking their own home may be invaded and burgled. No Fijian should be forced to quicken their pace while walking our streets because they fear they may be assaulted. No Fijian child should be left vulnerable and exposed to those who wish to harm them.

Voreqe Bainimarama
Fijian Prime Minister

NUMBERS

300,000

is the total number of Fijians who will soon have better access to reliable water after the signing of two contracts for the Rewa River Water Supply Scheme.

TWEET OF THE WEEK



@FijiAG

Only with defined #climate needs can #SmallStates attract the type of international, blended finance solutions to fully fund green development. Fiji's leading by example; we first cost out our needs (with a climate vulnerability assessment), and then took it to the global market.

CONTACT

Publisher: Sharvada Sharma
Sub Editor: Prashila Devi
Manager Vernacular: Villame Tikotani
North office: Level 3 Macuata House, Labasa
West office: Level 1 Ratu Nauliano House, Koroivalu

Contacts: Suva: 3301806 /
West: 6700086 / 9905965
North: 8811276 / 9905971
Fax: 3305139/3304663
news@govnet.gov.fj
www.fiji.gov.fj
@FijiRepublic
Fijian Government
visit us at www.fiji.gov.fj

Fiji engages IFC, World Bank to review policies

NANISE NEIMILA

THE Fijian Government has engaged the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the World Bank Group to undertake the review of the investment policy law.

This was highlighted by the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism, Local Government, Housing and Community Development Premila Kumar at the recent Fiji Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Business Summit 2019 held in Suva.

Minister Kumar said the main objective of the review is the modernization of Fiji's investment laws and regulations to be up to the international standards, as well as, adoptive of the global best practices.

"The approach is not amending the existing law but to replace it with a new and fresh law to include all investments, including domestic."

"In addition, the Fijian Government is improving the way we serve all Fijians, through the use of technology. "DigitalFiji" is bringing

the digital revolution to our country, our economy and into the lives of all Fijians. It will put essential services provided by the Fijian Government at the fingertips of ordinary Fijians anytime from anywhere."

Minister Kumar highlighted that the Ministry has undertaken the reforms to improve the processes involved in "doing business".

"We are working in consultation with the Singaporean Government to review, redesign and harmonize building permits process and starting a business process. By the end of June 2019, an online information portal will be launched."

Minister Kumar said this will provide all information in relation to building permits and starting a business, adding that Fijian businesses are at the core of all development plans.

"Our efforts are to continue to strive to provide a stable and fair-trading environment, and to generate new business opportunities to boost our trade relations with our partners."

"Fiji has graduated from a lower middle-income country to an upper middle-income

country in a short span of time. This has led to continued and consistent growth of the Fijian economy for almost a decade."

Meanwhile, Fiji has taken the lead role in ensuring that its trade agreements advance our economic and sustainable development goals.

"Fiji has signed the newest version of the Melanesian Spearhead Group Free Trade Agreement. An agreement that stands as a culmination of the vision first set out by the leaders during Fiji's chairmanship of the MSG in 2011."

"The Government is currently working with the parties to the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) in reviewing the existing trade agreement to ensure it remains relevant in today's time. This review will also enable greater intra-regional trade between Fiji and the other PICTA parties by simplifying the trading rules."

With discussions and ideas expected to develop through the summit Minister Kumar is adamant to develop forward-looking policies to expand our development frontier and support the vision of Transforming Fiji.



Minister for Education Rosy Akbar with more than 140 principals from various schools around the country during the 123rd Fiji Principals Association Conference. Photo: AZARIA FAREEN

Be role models, principals urged

AZARIA FAREEN

PRINCIPALS around the country were reminded to lead their respective schools in a holistic manner and develop the potential of every child to their fullest.

This message was relayed by the Minister for Education Rosy Akbar while speaking to over 140 principals from various schools around the country during the opening of the 123rd Fiji Principals Association Conference recently.

"As a group of professionals and experienced principals, you have a lot to contribute," Minister Akbar said.

She reiterated on issues of priority for the ministry – to share best



Minister for Education Rosy Akbar and permanent secretary for education Alison Burchell. Photo: AZARIA FAREEN

practices and teachers to be role models for the students and their community.

"Use this forum to network and share on how we all can be on the same platform to deal with issues pertaining to your field of work," Minister Akbar said.

"Your suggestions and contributions towards how we can take

the Ministry of Education to another level is very important. As a group of professionals and experienced teachers - now principals, you have a lot to contribute."

Minister Akbar encouraged the principals to move forward on a positive note and ensured the support of the ministry.

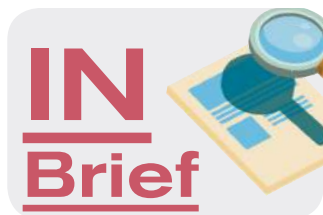
Principal of Tavua College Vi-

kashni Sharma said principals must continue to inspire teachers and students for improved teaching, learning and optimum performance in all facets of education.

"We must create an environment for the successful implementation of curriculum and continuously monitor teaching and learning and for this to happen as leaders, we have to be out of our comfort zones and be on the forefront," Mrs Sharma said.

"The focus of the 123rd Conference is to purely engage ourselves in Professional Development Sessions and the facilitators will undoubtedly inspire our thinking, bring innovative ideas and just as importantly confirm our networking in leading schools."

The two-day conference had eight sessions with reputable speakers to enlighten the principals on important aspects that affect them in schools.



PM: SRI LANKAN ATTACKS 'MONSTROUS'

PRIME Minister Voreqe Bainimarama has labelled the series of attacks in Sri Lanka targeting churches and other locations as "monstrous acts". Furthermore, the Prime Minister said acts perpetrated on Easter Sunday taking more than 200 lives "have no place in this world, especially on the holiest of days on the Christian calendar".

"We Fijians will do our part in fighting these heinous acts by condemning any and all forms of religious intolerance in the strongest of terms. We must actively work to rise above hatred, and fill the world with love."

Prime Minister Bainimarama, in expressing empathy towards those affected, also extended arms of friendship to Sri Lankan friends and neighbours living among us here in Fiji.

"We Fijians will do our part in fighting these heinous acts by condemning any and all forms of religious intolerance in the strongest of terms. We must actively work to rise above hatred, and fill the world with love."

FIJI SET TO HOST 52ND ADB MEETING

PREPARATIONS are underway for the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) 52nd Asia Development Bank Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors that Fiji is hosting.

The meeting, which has attracted 3,000 participants from 68 countries from around the world, will held in the jetset town of Nadi from May 1-5, 2019.

Fiji is the first Pacific developing member country to host ADB's Annual Meeting, which is the largest gathering of the bank and a unique opportunity for ADB Governors, government officials, the private sector, and development partners and experts to discuss critical issues and challenges facing Asia and the Pacific.

During an earlier visit to Fiji, ADB president Takehiko Nakao said, "I am impressed by the beautiful venues and high-quality facilities selected for the Annual Meeting".

The theme of the 2019 Annual Meeting is "Prosperity Through Unity".

GOVT STARTS NMW, WAGES REVIEW

THE Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations continues to carry out the review of the National Minimum Wage targeting employers and workers covered under the formal and informal sector of the economy.

The line Minister Parveen Kumar said the exercise is in line with the Government's commitment to protect the most vulnerable in society and providing them a basic standard of living to alleviate poverty.

The Ministry has commenced with the nationwide survey from April 17th, 2019 in all divisions with Dr. Partha Gangopadhyay leading the Government's review together with some Ministry officials and a total of 88 enumerators.

"Upon the completion of the survey, my Ministry will hold a nationwide public consultation on the outcome of the Consultant's Wage Survey Report. This will be then presented to the Employment Relations Advisory Board (ERAB), our tripartite mechanism and to Cabinet for consideration and decision."

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Attorney-General and Minister for Economy Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum (middle), chairs the Small States Ministerial Roundtable in the margins of World Bank Group (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Spring Meetings at Washington DC, United States of America. Photo: SUPPLIED

Fiji chairs World Bank's Small States Roundtable

ATTORNEY-GENERAL and Minister for Economy Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, as the chair of World Bank's Small States Forum, has highlighted the vulnerability and financial limitations of these countries.

The A-G, chaired the Small States Ministerial Roundtable in the margins of World Bank Group (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Spring Meetings in Washington DC, this month emphasised that "we must be reminded of the vulnerability of the small states and the financial limitations plaguing our ability to achieve our development aspirations"

The Forum is a group of 50 member countries of the WB comprising of both island and land-locked states that share unique geographical,

economic, and cultural specificities.

Fiji assumed the role of the chair of the Forum in October last year during the WB/IMF Annual Meetings and will remain in the chair's capacity for the next two years.

Highlighting the importance of ocean and blue economy, the A-G said "we are at a tipping point and we need to take urgent action to save our ocean".

Recognising that some of the small states including Fiji have already declared a complete ban on single-use plastics that are choking our seas and oceans, he highlighted the need to bolster such initiatives.

The high-level dialogue saw several Ministerial interventions on the three thematic areas of the Spring session of the Forum.

A key outcome of the Forum was the agreement to convene a working group of the Forum comprising of five Ministers to provide the high-level advisory support and champion the issues for small states with the objective of achieving tangible outcomes over the next two years.

Meanwhile the A-G also met with the Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies, Tharman Shanmugaratnam in the margins of the 2019 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development.

The pair discussed matters of mutual interest and cooperation.

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Attorney-General and Minister for Economy Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum with Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister and Co-ordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies, Tharman Shanmugaratnam. Photo: SUPPLIED

\$9.4b for resilience

FROM PAGE 1

we've put in place the ECAL tax, which is the Environment and Climate Adaptation Levy and we have put a specific law that all the funds raised from this particular levy must only go to climate adaptation measures and environment so it cannot go into the Government's consolidated fund," the A-G said.

Furthermore, the A-G said Fiji has developed from the ECAL idea that from the next budget cycle which begins in the 1st of August, it will take a small percentage out to be able to set up a trust fund that will, hopefully, attract many interested parties.

"Where we will put the trust fund, we have what you call the relocation trust fund because of encroaching waters, as you would know we have some 43 villages that are under threat and they have to be moved to higher ground," he said.

"So this will be a specialised fund to address not just relocation but perhaps some adaptation measures to curb relocations but if we do relocate then we have to build in the holistic approach, for example sustain-

able livelihoods and new livelihoods that they have to develop," the A-G said.

He urged the other vulnerable countries to do their CVA as it makes it very easy to go into the market in terms of climate finance.

The A-G highlighted how Fiji was able to do this when last year the Fijian Government worked with International Financial Corporation and World Bank to develop the green bonds for Fiji- first emerging market to issue green bonds which are listed in the London Stock Exchange.

He re-emphasised the importance of having a blended finance approach as not everything can be done by one particular source of funding.

"We have a particular water environment project, a water and sewerage project where we have blended finance approach, we have Global Funds approximately \$32m, we have ADB that has funded part of the loan and we have the Fijian Government which is putting around \$150 million raised through those revenue measures and we have \$400m project for the span of seven years but without that blended finance approach we would not have been able to do it," the A-G said.



'A wonderful time to be a parent'



Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama with permanent secretary communication Sharvada Sharma during the official launch of the digitalFIJI birth registration app at Suvavou House last week. Photo: ERONI VALILI

This new Birth Registration mobile "app" will allow for the electronic registration of the birth of a child; making a once tedious process easier for new parents who, frankly, already have enough to worry about when welcoming a new member to their families.

Voreqe Bainimarama
Prime Minister

PRASHILA DEVI

PRIME Minister Voreqe Bainimarama, in launching digitalFIJI's Birth Registration App, believes that it is a wonderful time to start a family in Fiji. "It's a wonderful time to raise children — children who will go on to realise opportunities that we can't even begin to imagine today. Through our continued visionary leadership, we will not only grow our economy, but adapt it with new technologies and innovations to keep our development ahead of the curve — making Fiji's future one of unimaginable potential," the head of Government.

Marked with a ceremony that saw nine mothers with 11 babies- two set of twins- receiving their newborn's first official document, their birth certificate that was filed online through the app, Prime Minister Bainimarama said it will make life easier and more convenient for countless Fijian families.

Prime Minister Bainimarama said, "This new Birth Registration mobile "app" will allow for the electronic registration of the birth of a child; making a once tedious process easier for new parents who, frankly, already have enough to worry about when welcoming a new member to their families".

Prime Minister Bainimarama said the app follows the successful rollout of Directory@Gov (<https://directory.digital.gov.fj/>) and the MyFeedBack (<https://feedback.digital.gov.fj/MyFeedbackNA>) launched last year.

"Since that time, we've had 13,000 users access Directory-at-Gov and 300 feedbacks sent in over MyFeedback; 80 per cent of which have been successfully addressed," he said.

He also highlighted the other initiative of Government to provide relief to parents of newborn, through the provision of Parent-hood Assistance Payments in the form of a \$1,000 given to new mothers in a house-

hold with an income threshold of \$30,000 and below.

"Some of the mothers here today will also be receiving a letter for those assistance payments — setting them up for their first \$500 payment to help with newborn expenses, and setting up their bank account for the second \$500 deposit," Prime Minister Bainimarama said.

The online registration of newborn babies is currently only available for those born at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital (CWMH) as it will be rolled out in other hospitals after the pilot phase and for the next two years, Government has waived the fee for a copy of the birth certificate.

Mothers give thanks for Govt initiative

EPARAMA WARUA

TRAVELLING all the way from the interior of Viti Levu, queuing up at the Birth, Death and Marriage (BDM) office and then going through the lengthy paper work has been the norm for parents of new born babies.

Such was the stress that parents like Abosiba and Volau Tabua from the interior of Ra will no longer have to undergo after Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama launched the Birth Registration App under its digitalFIJI initiative recently.

Before its launch, parents from rural and maritime areas would have to spend days or weeks following the birth of their child for their birth registration process.

Coming all the way from Rakiraki to register her children, Mrs Tabua said while having a baby is not an easy process on its own, the tension and hassle multiplies



Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama with new-born babies and their parents at Suvavou House last week. Photo: ERONI VALILI

when registering children.

This is why she heaped praise on the new app as she became one of the nine women receiving their child's birth certificate for the first time through the e-Lane Digital Birth Registration platform.

"I came all the way from Rakiraki just to give birth, and through this app, we can sit from the comfort of our homes and fill the forms online. We don't have to come and stand in line the whole day on queue anymore, saves time," Mrs

Tabua said.

The Birth Registration App not only saves time but also saves money for any birth that is registered electronically through this app the normal fee for a copy of the first birth certificate will be waived.

"My husband is a farmer, it's really hard to support new born babies because we don't have any job, and this saves us money too," the 23-year-old mother said.

Being a housewife and a mother,

Mrs Tabua thanked the Government for the initiative to help ease the process of birth registration especially for people living outside the capital city.

"I thank the government for the assistance because some of us don't come from well off families," she said.

Similarly, her husband said he's thankful for the initiative as it makes registration faster and easy for him as a father.

"For this app, we've seen that

it's very easy because there is no more the long wait, you just register the information online and you pick up the certificate in the office," Mr Tabua said.

"This has make things easier for us as parents. I'm so happy that my daughter is receiving her birth certificate today. I would advise everyone in Fiji to download this app," he added.

Government continues to adopt new technology and making digital services available to all Fijians.



300,000 Fijians to benefit from project

MEREANI GONEDUA

A TOTAL of 300,000 Fijians will soon have better access to reliable water after the signing of two contracts for the Rewa River Water Supply Scheme.

The contracts, which were signed by Water Authority of Fiji chairman Bhavesh Kumar and Ji Xiayong who represented the company Sinohydro-HDEC JV, will be the single largest infrastructure project ever managed by WAF.

Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama, while officiating at the signing held at the Grand Pacific Hotel, stated that the \$266 million scheme represents one of the largest and most impactful infrastructure projects ever undertaken by the Fijian Government.

He re-emphasised that such contracts are much more than just ink on paper as it represents the continued realisation of the Government's constitutional mandate to grant all Fijians reliable access to clean water.

"These contracts are the promise of a new, hugely expansive network of water supply infrastructure — a network that will directly better the lives of approximately 300,000 of our people in the Suva-Nausori Corridor, from Rewa to Tailevu. That includes villages in Sawani and the areas around Viria which will enjoy access to clean, piped water for the very first time," PM Bainimarama said.

He highlighted that as a government, making sure that clean water is supplied to the people ranks among their most sacred and important duties.



Water Authority of Fiji chairman Bhavesh Kumar and Sinohydro-HDEC JV company representative Ji Xiayong seal the deal as Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama looks on.

"The completion of stage one of this scheme will add a minimum production capacity of 40 mega litres per day to our national network of water infrastructure. Stage two of construction will double system capacity to 80 mega litres per day, and stage three will enable this system to generate, at minimum, 100 mega litres of water in a day.

He stated that the Rewa River Water Supply project is only one piece of a massive Urban Water Supply and Waste Water Management Project undertaken by Government — a project which will expand and upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure to the tune of \$855

million. PM Bainimarama also acknowledged the Asian Development Bank, the European Investment Bank and the Green Climate Fund for their support towards the project — support that has taken the form of both financial assistance and their invaluable expertise.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) regional director Masayuki Tachiiri reiterated that the project will ensure improved health and better access to safe supply of water.

He also highlighted their appreciation in co-financing with the Fijian Government, the Green Climate Fund and the European Investment Bank.

Riverbank initiatives for Naitasiri villages

ERONI VALILI

“CLIMATE change impact is going to get worse before they ever begin to get better. We can't wait on the pace of global climate politics, we need to begin adapting our communities now, before it is too late.”

This was the sombre message by Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama after he commissioned the Riverbank Protection Projects in two villages in Naitasiri recently.

Prime Minister Bainimarama reminded the villagers of Wainawaqa and Nadakuni the effects of climate change and the vulnerability of their livelihood.

Wainawaqa Village headman Serupepe Koroitubuna, while thanking Government for the projects undertaken, said that constant flooding and soil erosion would be a thing of the past and that the project was a timely intervention.

"We won't have to worry about soil erosion or relocation, our children and the elderly are protected from constant flooding," Mr Koroitubuna said.

The project includes the construction of eight boulder groyne (a low wall or sturdy barrier built out into the sea) works, which will be carried out at a cost of over \$984,000.

Nadakuni Village headman Josaia Qarikau shared the same sentiments thanking PM Bainimarama for the timely intervention saying it was one of the first major projects in the village costing about \$975,397.00.

PM Bainimarama reassured both villagers that with these riverbank protection projects there will no longer be a threat that makes them fear for their safety and the safety of their families.

"When this project is completed, this river will no longer be a threat that makes you fear for your safety and the safety of your families. The balance that has existed between the communities of Wainawaqa and the Waidina River will be restored. This river will remain a source of water to drink, stay clean and support your farms, a source of food and a source of your livelihoods."

"As was the case for your parents, your grandparents and all those who came before you, this river will continue to form an essential piece of your identities. As it will for your children, your grandchildren and the future generations."

"Of course, your community is not the only community besieged by our changing climate," PM Bainimarama said.

PM launches \$975K riverbank project

FELIX LESINAVALU

A \$975,000 riverbank protection project to prevent flooding was launched by Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama at Nadakuni village in Naitasiri.

The project will remove the threat from Waidina River.

According to Divisional Commissioner Central Josefo Navuku the development in Naitasiri is guided by the National Development Plans (NDP).

"This is carried out through the sectorial policies with the major focus on infrastructural developments on Electricity, Water, Agriculture and Roads," Mr Navuku said.

He highlighted in 2018 a \$212,000 water supply project at Nadakuni village was done which led to the construction of a new dam and other projects

"Through the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, all villages in Fiji will have their village profiles and integrated village development plans developed."

He said there are major works carried out this year by sectors which are rural electrification, roads works, agriculture and animal health & production.



Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama during the ground breaking ceremony on the construction of river bank protection works at Nadakuni Village in Naitasiri. Photo: FELIX LESINAVALU

Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama reminded the community that the struggle brought by climate change is not Fiji's struggle alone.

"This is a crisis of global proportions and we must work together to unite the people of the world to protect our oceans, our natural environment and our climate from further harm."

PM Bainimarama said his Government will continue to fight the

growing threat of climate change. "We will continue to demand greater action from the industrialised nations of the world.

"We will continue to forge partnerships that advance that important cause."

PM Bainimarama said these protection works enable the villagers to go about their lives and not live with the fear of flooding.

He also said that the Government will cover the cost entirely

for both projects launched at Nadakuni village and Wainawaqa village

"When this project is completed, this river will no longer be a threat that makes you fear for your safety and the safety of your families."

"This river will remain a source of water to drink, stay clean and support your farms, a source of food and a source of your livelihoods."



The new Valelevu Police Station that was opened by Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama (inset) last week.
 Photo: ERONI VALILI

\$1.2m police station set to ensure safety

ROMEKA KUMARI

THE Government has spent \$2.1 million for the safety of Fijians living in the most densely-populated corridor in Fiji as the Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama opened the Valelevu Police Station last week.

During the opening of the police station, Prime Minister Bainimarama said the Government has invested in the safety of the people in Valelevu and the greater Nasinu area which has a population of 130,000 by strengthening the law enforcement in the area.

“Among all the ways a nation can assess its progress, I believe the most important measure of all is whether or not society is becoming safer for its citizens. Public safety is the most essential pillar of any nation’s development and the most sacred duty of any government to uphold,” the head of Government said.

He also highlighted that Valelevu and Nasinu

account for 15 per cent of crimes that are committed in the country with burglaries, robberies and assault being the major unlawful acts carried out.

“No Fijian should live with the terror of thinking their own home may be invaded and burgled. No Fijian should be forced to quicken their pace while walking on our streets because they fear they may be assaulted. No Fijian child should be left vulnerable and exposed to those who wish to harm them.”

Sisilia Kaveni, who lives in the Valelevu police compound, said the new police station is going to be a great help to the people in the Suva-Nausori corridor.

“The new police station in Valelevu is not only a great help for Nasinu and Valelevu people but also to those living alongside the Suva-Nausori corridor,” Mrs Kaveni said.

She added that the Government has always

been doing a lot for the people of Fiji and is continuing to do more.

“This Government has helped many people around the country and it has done more by opening up a police station here in Valelevu which shows that the Government is concerned about its people and their safety.”

Shahista Chand, a tertiary student living in Valelevu for the past 20 years, said, “I think the opening of police station in Valelevu is a great initiative taken by the Government and people will now be able to report any criminal and civil matter which bothers them.”

For Davunoi Bolavesi, 54, Valelevu police officers serve as a helping hand for the community members.

“The police officers here at the Valelevu Police Station will show pride while doing their duty and will also catch those criminals who bring the societies name down,” Mr Bolavesi said.

PM commended for global climate dialogue

AZARIA FAREEN

F IJI has championed the cause of the vulnerable Small Islands Developing States and brought that perspective to center stage globally, in particularly using the Talanoa dialogue.

This has been viewed as an effective tool of communication needed to advance the global climate negotiations.

These were the congratulatory words from the director general of The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI), Dr Ajay Mathur while handing over the 2019 Sustainable Development Leadership Award to Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama recently.

PM Bainimarama was announced as the recipient of the award during the World Sustainable Development Summit in February, this year, in New Delhi in recognition and appreciation of his Presidency of the 23rd session of Conference of Parties and climate initiatives.

“We are proud of your promise that at least 10 per cent of the electricity in Fiji would come from the new renewable sources and this is in addition to the hydroelectricity which is already zero carbon,” Dr Mathur said.

He applauded the Fijian Government’s 4-Million Trees-in-4 Years initiative and noted it to be an extremely ambitious target for Fiji.

“Your longer term strategy to go to zero carbon, the Sovereign Green Bond being a first in the world, the Environment & Climate Adaptation Levy that has been put in place on plastics and tourism are things the world can learn from.”

While receiving the award, PM Bainimarama said “this award is more than a win for me, or a win for Fiji — it is a win for small and developing states around the globe”.

“We very much value the work that you’re doing to pave the way for a more sustainable future. Organizations like yours, and leaders like you, are exactly who we need in our “grand coalition” in order to really move the needle and make a difference for the sake of our planet’s future,” the Fijian Head of Government said.

“That spirit of cooperation is precisely what made Fiji’s COP23 presidency such a success. It took an entire team of climate champions to make sure things went smoothly — a network that has worked tirelessly to help curb climate change and create a legacy of global leadership for Fiji.”

Medals presented to Police officers

MARICA CAUCAU

THE Government’s recognition of the value of human capital has already been reflected in the allocation of resources to train and up skill existing police officers in addition to a nearly \$25 million initiative that was announced in last year’s budget to regularize over 600 positions.

This statement was made by the Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama at the recent medal presentation for officers of the Fiji Police Force.

“Our people-first approach to bolstering the Force has been ongoing for years now, and it’s starting to yield results — over the last three years, crime has decreased by 11 per cent, with a 15 per cent decrease in crimes against women,” PM Bainimarama said.

In highlighting the new and upgrad-

ed police outposts, new vehicles, and other recent investments, he said that these were tangible signs of the Government’s resolute commitment to building a robust and modern Police Force.

“But from new technologies to new buildings, none of this investment would matter if it wasn’t for the most important factor of all: You, the officers of this Force,” PM Bainimarama said.

The head of Government also visited the biology and chemistry lab, the pathology lab, and the Crime Scene Investigation unit and was briefed by the respective senior officers that head those units.

Briefing PM Bainimarama the Manager Forensics, SP Margaret Marshall said that aside from the police officers there were 20 civilians that were employed at the Forensics unit.



Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama at the medal presentation to Police Officers at Nasova, Suva. Photo: NANISE NEIMILA



Push for stronger climate change commitment

NANISE NEIMILA

THERE is an urgent need for a strengthened international cooperation and commitment to enhance the global action on climate change and oceans preservations.

This was the message that resonated throughout the landmark visit by His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Norway Haakon Magnus to Fiji recently.

Prince Magnus spoke on the health of the planet to students, academics and members of civil societies during a visit to the University of the South Pacific on three key aspects- international cooperation, technol-

ogy and leadership.

He shared his experience and relationship with the ocean and his belief that it is possible to tackle climate change despite the enormous challenges that comes with it.

“Eight million tonnes of plastic is released into the ocean every year and that means 15 tonnes of plastic every single minute.

“Obviously this is not sustainable for us human beings, our common oceans are under threat so we, all of us who live on this planet have to stop using our oceans as a dumping ground.”

He adds that international cooperation is needed to address this as it is important and the countries in the South Pacific and

Norway share a commitment to fighting marine pollution.

“For thousands of years we have lived by the sea and we have lived off the sea so we share common knowledge in protecting our oceans.

“We are already experiencing the effects of climate change, sea-level rise, cyclones are occurring more often than ever before in the Pacific and the coral reefs are being affected by pollution.”

“For us in Norway we are experiencing longer winters and melting of ice-bergs in the arctic.”

He added that there was a need to work collectively to achieve the common goal of

addressing climate change and also seeking ways to mitigate the climatic effects.

Prince Magnus also spoke on technological innovation that was the driving change and it was happening faster than predicted like the price of setting up solar panels which has come down by as much as 250 times in present times as compared to the 1970s.

He also applauded and stressed the importance of leadership displayed by individuals like Fijian Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama who has brought the plight of the sinking Pacific island states to the international arena.

Nine-year crusade for clean oceans



Anika Thompson (left), with Fijian kids during their clean-up campaign in Yasawa. Photo: SUPPLIED

HALITESH DATT

FOUNDED in 2010 by an Australian sailor Ian Thompson, Ocean Crusaders is on a mission, especially in Australia and Fiji to clean oceans, beaches and campaign against plastic pollution.

Being a frequent visitor to our paradise, Mr Thomson considers Fiji as his second home.

However, despite being treated to the white sandy beaches and a tropical island paradise with Bula smiles, Thompson was worried about the level of pollution in the Fijian seas.

Mr Thompson forged a partnership with Captain Cook Cruises Fiji and developed a Trash Art competition where students from around the country were to create simple pieces of art from trash collected from beaches.

The top six most voted participants were then invited for a four day cruise that also included clean-up of beaches.

“We cleaned Browns Beach first and collected predominantly polystyrene and plastic bottles. Next we cleaned Gunu Village Beach and this was a real eye opener for them. As we found lots of debris that was coming from the village, we eventually found a fire pit on the water’s edge where they had been burning debris.

“Charred plastic and other items that hadn’t burnt littered the entire

beach front and down the nearby river. It was a case of the island villages not having a solution to their debris so they burn it. Ninety five (95) per cent of the rubbish on this beach was from the village,” he said.

“Our final beach clean was in Blue Lagoon. Again we found the most common items were polystyrene and plastic bottles, with other hard plastics making up the majority of the rest. One particularly interesting thing we kept finding was plastic toothbrushes. We found at least two on every beach we visited.”

Just within a week, the team collected more than 80 kilogram of trash from the three beaches. These were predominantly polystyrene pieces, plastic lids, plastic bottles and clothing and rubber materials.

“From the above we were able to determine that the majority of the debris was native to Fiji, there is a problem in remote villages for debris disposal, the Yasawa’s are likely fed from major rivers in Ba & Lautoka, plastic bottles are an issue in Fiji, as with every other country in the world and polystyrene is one of the biggest issues in the world for marine pollution and Fiji is no exception,” Mr Thompson said.

He hopes to continue his crusade for cleaner Fijian oceans. He already has plans in place to set up a registered environment charity in Fiji to continue his noble cause.



Australian environmentalist Ian Thompson with the bags of trash he collected with the children in Yasawa. Photo: SUPPLIED

Single-use plastics ‘the biggest issue’

HALITESH DATT

AN Australian environmentalist believes the Fijian Government’s move to ban single use plastics by 2020 is a step in the right direction and will benefit the country.

Ian Thompson, who is the founder of Oceans Crusaders says single use plastics are the biggest issue currently faced by countries like Fiji and Australia.

“It is just badly managed. We need plastics for many vital things, however, we do not need single use plastics and the world is moving to remove

them. Europe has just signed an agreement to ban them, Australia is moving towards it and of course it will benefit Fiji as well,” Mr Thompson said.

He believes that there is enough plastic in the world today to last forever but with innovative approaches and new technologies, he is optimistic that our strategies to deal with plastic pollution can be headed towards new direction.

“These plastics can be dealt with in recycling with new technology being able to create products from co-mingled plastic with up to 10 per cent contamination. Imagine turning all of your plastic debris

into building blocks, posts and beams. We can replace a lot of timber items with items made from recycled plastic. Plastic can be melted down and extruded into new products, or burnt and fuels recovered to power cities.”

“We need to find ways to use plastics already in existence and never use virgin plastics again,” Mr Thompson added.

“The technologies are there and the Fijian Government needs to invest now to save the future. Ocean Crusaders would like to work with the Fijian Government to advise them and facilitate these processes”



Parents happy as PM launches e-Lane initiative

The Government has launched an initiative that will make it easier for parents of newborn babies to register their children. And, rather than travel long distances, queuing up at Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) offices and compiling lengthy paperwork, parents can use the Birth Registration App under the Government's digitalFiji initiative to register their newborns.

Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama launched the Birth Registration App in Suva recently and the move was welcomed by parents, especially Abosiba and Volau Tabua who came all the way from Rakiraki to register their children.

Parents need to download the Birth Registration App, follow the simple instructions on screen and submit their registration electronically.

Once the online registration is completed, new parents can schedule a set time to arrive at the BDM Office, where they can then collect the birth certificate of their newborn child.

For the time being, this new app will only be available to register births at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital.

This new application follows the successful introduction of the Directory-at-Gov and the MyFeedback apps, which were launched last year. **Photos: ERONI VALILI**



Police officers presented with medals

The Government is stepping up efforts to train and upskill police officers apart from a \$25 million allocation in last year's national budget to regularise more than 600 positions in the force. It is part of efforts that recognise the value of human capital.

This was revealed by Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama at a recent medal presentation for officers of the Fiji Police

Force. In highlighting the new and upgraded police outposts, new vehicles, and other recent investments, he said that these were tangible signs of the Government's resolute commitment to building a robust and modern Police Force.

"Our people-first approach to bolstering the Force has been ongoing for years now, and it's starting to yield results

Force. – over the last three years, crime has decreased by 11 per cent, with a 15 per cent decrease in crimes against women," PM Bainimarama said. The Head of Government also visited the biology and chemistry lab, the pathology lab, and the Crime Scene Investigation unit and was briefed by the respective senior officers that head those units.

Photos: ERONI VALILI





Additional payment for sugarcane growers



From left: Fiji Sugar Corporation, (FSC) chief executive officer Graham Clark, FSC chairman Vishnu Mohan and permanent secretary for Sugar Yogesh Karan.
 Photo: LITIA VULDAUSIGA

LITIA VULDAUSIGA

CLOSE to 12,000 cane growers have been paid an additional payment of \$8.15 per tonne of cane by the Fiji Sugar Corporation, alongside their third cane payment.

The FSC has paid out a total of \$52.87 per tonne of cane for the 2018 season and alongside the additional sum of \$8.15, brings the total payment for the 2018 season to \$61.02 per tonne of cane, with the balance of the guaranteed cane price of \$85 per ton payable to farmers with the fourth and final wash up payments later this year.

"The third cane payment is a bit of a different one," said FSC chief executive officer, Graham Clark.

"We've introduced the notion of the guaranteed cane price for the first time.

"The modality for paying the cane price are set out in the Sugar Industry Master Award and it essentially revolves around five payments to the farmers, which are initially driven off a forecast price.

"So the forecast price is given earlier in the season, before the mills even start, so more than a month before the mills start. And that's to enable farmers to start planning and getting the cash flow requirements they need."

Growers are given a total of five cane payments, with the first three paid out for 2018 crop. Last year's forecast price was \$66 per tonne, so farmers enjoy the benefit of an increment.

The CEO noted that with a guaranteed cane price of \$85 per tonne introduced in the 2018/2019 National Budget, the FSC has had to adjust payments accordingly.

Growers will look forward to another two payments of that residual amount to complete the guaranteed cane price payment."

The FSC is transitioning from Master Award and the Guaranteed Cane Price, for the next two years, covering three seasons.

In accordance with the Sugar Industry Master Award, the Sugar Industry Tribunal certified that the net share of the growers' cane proceeds up to and including the 29 of February 2019, is \$19,159,011. This is equivalent to \$46.64 per tonne of cane.



We've introduced the notion of the guaranteed cane price for the first time.

The modality for paying the cane price are set out in the Sugar Industry Master Award and it essentially revolves around five payments to the farmers, which are initially driven off a forecast price.

Graham Clark
 Fiji Sugar Corporation, (FSC), chief executive officer

Policies set to clean up sporting industry

LITIA VULDAUSIGA

NEW policies are underway by the Ministry of Youth and Sports to ensure a clean sporting industry, with the Government also showing interest in signing onto the Council of Europe's Convention of Sports Competition.

"Fiji is currently working on its Anti-Doping and Sports and physical activity policy, scheduled to be completed by mid-2019," confirmed Minister, Parveen Kumar at the Council's recent Pacific Seminar on Manipulation of Sports Competition, in Nadi.

"The Government is committed to supporting sports and development in Fiji because it contributes to social and economic growth, improves health and well-being and reduces incidence and the spread of non-communicable diseases."

The ministry and Fiji National Sports Commission are working on a Sports Governance Code and several new policies to protect Fijian athletes and the industry; a Drug Free Sports Act, Safety in Sports Policy, Protection of the Athlete Policy and Child Protection Policy.

An independent disciplinary body for sports and a whistle blower's policy are also being set up.

Fijian sports people have become major contributors to the national economy by way of remittances, particularly by rugby union players.

"A report by Kawamasu and Molar (2014) stated that Fijian athletes remitted around \$18.4 million per annum. This is equivalent to 11 percent of the country's total remittances within a year," Minister Kumar cited.

"Stewart Withers, Richardson and Sewabu (2014) in a study found Pacific athletes sent an estimate NZ\$21.7 million per year which is remittances from New Zealand alone.

The Ministry anticipates a greater proportion of women among Fiji's professional sporting exports.

Over the past seven years, the Government has increased the sporting budget from \$400,000 annually to over \$20 million.

FSC invests \$30m, prepares for cane crush

LITIA VULDAUSIGA

A COMMITMENT to the Fijian sugar industry sees the Fiji Sugar Corporation, (FSC), investing some \$30 million in capital projects this year.

As part of its largest capital project, the Rarawai Mill in Ba will receive a full refurbishment to its boiler.

"More than 30 engineers from India are working on the project, to restore adequate steam supply to ensure a steadier and consistent

running of the mill," confirmed FSC chief executive officer, Graham Clark.

Sufficient levels of steam would enable suitable sugar processing.

"What this means is that our sugar recoveries, or how much sugar would we recover from the juice, will improve when the factory runs steadily."

In the Northern Division, the milling tandems for the FSC's Labasa Mill are also being refurbished, with the mill's shredder already re-initiated.

"The objective for Labasa this

year is to ensure consistency in their crush," the CEO noted.

Favourable weather has also been cited for conducive cane growth, as a total of 5,200 hectares of new planting has been completed so far this year.

Mr Clark said crop this coming season would likely increase by more than 10 percent from 2018.

Yield management has been a focal point for the FSC and stands at just under 50 tonnes of cane per hectare, with a goal to reach 60 tonnes per hectare in the next two years.

"There is currently a review underway led by the Sugar Industry Tribunal of gang and quota definition. We are trying to achieve optimum levels of efficiency for mechanical harvesters. This year, we will have more than 60 mechanical harvesters in operation," he confirmed.

An industry team has returned from China to inspect mechanical harvesters for use on hilly terrain, which would expedite efforts for farms on craggy territory.

The FSC plans to trial two such harvesters this year.



Oxygen contractors for hospital

JOSAIA RALAGO

SAVUSAVU Sub-Divisional Hospital in Cakaudrove became the third hospital in Vanua Levu to be assisted with five oxygen contractors.

This is a project by Cure Kids and the Australian Government to assist patients admitted with a lack of oxygen in their body.

Savusavu Hospital's senior divisional medical officer Dr Tiko Saumalua said the provision of the oxygen contractors would be of

great use to them.

Dr Saumalua said while the equipment used previously was very costly, the biomedical equipment they recently received was not only cost efficient but also portable.

"Sometimes, we do not have the budget on our side and we have to rely on it to be released in order to purchase the gas, but this (equipment) basically converts atmospheric oxygen into one that patients can use. It kills a lot of things at one time,

it helps in the finance side and we can also use it anywhere," he said.

While receiving the equipment from Cure Kids and the Australian government, the Minister for Health and Medical Services Dr Ifereimi Waqainabete said that the country's current budget for oxygen was more than \$3 million.

"We should be looking at renewable sources and obviously we have oxygen in the atmosphere and to hear that Cure Kids and the Australian government have been

doing this was very exciting because this is what we need to do all around Fiji," Minister Waqainabete said.

"The effort of the Government is that we do not want to leave any Fijian behind, in our humble opinion, no one should die because of lack of oxygen."

He said they continue to hold discussions with the relevant parties on how this could be rolled out into other parts of the country.

Other two hospitals with oxygen contractors are Nabouwalu and Taveuni.

Disabled persons trained as traditional masseurs

JOSAIA RALAGO

THE Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons, (FNCDP), students in Labasa are now being trained to perform Urut massages.

This is an action plan by staff of FNCDP and other organisations who were a part of a team that had undergone a two weeks training in Indonesia at the beginning of this year.

While speaking at the opening of the Urut massage Unit at their base in Labasa, FNCDP director Kushyila Devi said the students trained in this art could later use this knowledge to earn a living.

"There were 16 Fijians who went to In-

donesia for this training and their action plan was to come back and set up a training centre with the council, so that the knowledge gained could trickle down to the trainers and to be also passed on to other individuals living with disabilities," she said.

Ms Devi said while this was a programme targeted for the blind, she changed it so it could be offered to everyone registered in their centres.

"I changed that and for it to be offered with everybody with a disability so they can learn and generate income for themselves in the community or to be employed in the open market," she said.

"I am thankful to the Government of the day for the funding they provide to the council to move forward and to ensure that disability becomes inclusive."

Ms Devi is calling on people living with disability to come forward and take advantage of the opportunity that is being provided to help train them so they can earn their living and be independent.

The FNCDP Urut Massage Unit in Labasa is also open for the public if they seek massage therapy.

"I am thankful to the Government of the day for the funding they provide to the council to move forward and to ensure that disability becomes inclusive together."

Kushyila Devi
Director of Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons, (FNCDP).



Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services Jone Usamate with Government officials and villagers at the commissioning of their Solar Hybrid System at Tukavesi Village last week. Photo: JOSAIA RALAGO

Villagers rejoice as solar system commissioned

JOSAIA RALAGO

EIGHTY-seven-year-old Ana Koli was joined by other villagers of Tukavesi Village in celebrating the commissioning of their Solar Hybrid System last week.

The villagers who have been accessing electricity from this source since late last year, have commended the Government for this investment which has made life easier for them.

"I have lived in the village for more than three decades and this is ever since I retired as a nurse in 1987. During this time I have seen a lot of development take place," Mrs Koli said.

"One of this is electricity, before we used kerosene lanterns, benzene lamps, then we started using generator but now we have 24/7 electricity supply."

"If you ask anyone in this village, they can tell you that the day we got our electricity will go down in history as one of the happiest days of our lives."

Mrs Koli said now they could watch television, use electrical irons, washing machines and some other electrical appliances.

A mother of four, Maraia Biudole shared similar sentiments saying that the consistent supply of electricity to their home was what they had been praying for.

"Last year, our prayers were answered and we thank God and the Government for granting us what we had been hoping for," Mrs Biudole said.



Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services Jone Usamate unveils the plaque at the commissioning of their Solar Hybrid System at Tukavesi Village last week. Photo: JOSAIA RALAGO

"I have a washing machine and it has saved me a lot of time and energy, allowing me to attend to other household chores. Our lives as stay home moms is not easy, we have a lot to do and with the presence of electricity, it has been made easier."

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Disaster Management and Meteorological Services Jone Usamate said 372 villagers, 92 households, a primary school, a health centre, police post and the District Officers office were beneficiaries of this investment.



Staff members of Department of Information and Ministry of Forestry with their family after planting about 2000 mangrove seedlings along Nasese foreshore in Suva last week.
Photo: AZARIA FAREEN

DEPTFO backs 4m trees in four years initiative

AZARIA FAREEN

AS an initiative of Government, a national priority in fact, of planting 4-Million-Trees-in 4-Years has been gaining momentum with various government ministries and stakeholders around the country coming on board.

Stepping up to partake in this program was the Department of Information staff, their friends and family and the Ministry of Forestry officers who planted about 2000 mangrove seedlings along Nasese foreshore recently.

Forestry officer Maleli Nakasava said a lot of interest is being shown by communities, government ministries and corporate bodies after the

launch of this initiative.

Mr Nakasava, who is responsible for this program, says the target for the Ministry is to plant 83,000 seedlings per month which does not include mangroves.

"The target for the ministry is to plant 500-hectares of mangroves and we have surpassed the threshold of 100,000 where 130,000 seedlings have already been planted nationwide," Mr Nakasava said.

"We are encouraging communities and stakeholders to reach out to the ministry should they wish to be part of this noble cause," Mr Nakasava added.

"We are giving away free seedlings to those communities who are interested in planting and

there is a community incentive payment of \$244 per hectare that we will be paying out once the planting is completed."

Mr Nakasava revealed that the Northern Division is taking the lead in this initiative.

"We have been using mahogany wildings for planting in the central and eastern division and the Northern division have been directly sowing the seeds as the survival rate is very high," he said.

Department of Information's acting director, Izek Lal, has applauded the efforts of his staff for taking a lead role in the planting of mangrove seedlings and contributing positively towards the preservation of our environment.

Mr Lal says this is also part of the Department's corporate social responsibility initiatives.

\$24k boat boosts fisheries protection

LITIA VULDAUSIGA

THE guardianship of traditional fishing grounds has been boosted in Nadi, with the provision of a new \$24,000 boat and engine from the Ministry of Fisheries.

The line Minister, Semi Koroilavesau presented the resources to the Navokacake Fish Wardens Association in Navoci Village, who are the first mainland community to receive such assistance under the ministry's fish warden's program.

"Usually my ministry gives boats to maritime communities such as those in Lau, Kadavu and Lomaiviti, but this is the first occasion for a village on both mainland Viti Levu and Vanua Levu to be handed a boat and engine," he said.

Some 30 association members



Minister for Fisheries Semi Koroilavesau and members of the vanua ko Nakovacake with their new boat at Navoci Village, Nadi.
Photo: LITIA VULDAUSIGA

underwent training and are now licensed and certified fish wardens.

"The Nakovacake Fish Warden's Association was set up by the Nakovacake Development Trust to organize our youths into seeing the importance of protecting our qoliqoli," Nakovacake Development Trust secretary, Asinate Dawai said.

Nakovacake holds one of the largest fishing grounds in the Western Division, with their domain

stretching from Akuilau Island near Denarau to Lomolomo in Vuda and covering the entire Nadi Bay.

"The first set of fish wardens were established in 2014, with the second lot in 2017. The wardens take patrol shifts to combat illegal fishing. There have been reports of illegal fishing and increased poaching in the vanua of Nakovacake and this new boat and engine from the Ministry of Fisheries will greatly assist us address these is-

suues," Ms Dawai noted.

Minister Koroilavesau commended the Nakovacake Development Trust for their commitment to improving the livelihoods of their people and the management of their resources.

The new boat and 75 horsepower engine is the second to be handed out by the Ministry of Fisheries this year and amongst many assistance programs offered by the Government to help communities.

School's smart city concept tops award

EMI KOROITANOA

THE Government is working towards not only achieving 100 per cent renewable energy supply by 2036 but wants to improve energy efficiency as well.

This was the information given by the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Jone Usamate, at the 2018 School's Energy Saver Award and the 2019 Water, Environment and Energy Conservation (WE-ECO) Competition event held in Lautoka recently.

Minister Usamate said energy efficiency and conservation is one of the cost-effective measures to address energy consumption.

Aside from its target on renewable energy, he spoke on the energy efficiency measure taken by the Government.

"We are educating our people to save and use energy wisely and to adopt and purchase energy efficient technologies and appliances," Minister Usamate said.

"Government has put in place a number of programs to address the efficient use of energy. This includes the Minimum Energy Performance Standards Labelling (MEPSL) Program which came into effect in 2012 to prevent the sale of inefficient appliances in our markets."

He said since the implementation of this program till to date, an estimated savings of 2.8 million kilo watt hours in electricity has been achieved, which equates to approximately 600 tonnes of diesel fuel saved and managed reduction of 737 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2) in greenhouse gas emissions.

Meanwhile, A.D. Patel College scooped first place for the Energy Models Award under the national level category and also walked away with a \$3000 cheque.

A.D Patel College had designed a renewable energy saver model, calling it the "Smart City".

Amongst the group of winners from this category was the schools headboy Ricky Chand, who recounted the experience of being part of the competition.

"We started this project around April last year, our teacher informed us about this competition so we were excited," he said.

Mr Chand urged other students to participate in such competitions as such, saying that society will also benefit as renewable energy will improve lives.

"It also gives a moment of pride to the schools who have won such competitions," he added.

Fiji, India ties strengthen biodiversity work

AZARIA FAREEN

A MEETING between the Minister for Waterways and Environment Dr Mahendra Reddy and the Director General of The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI), Ajay Mathur aims to strengthen the biodiversity work undertaken by the Government.

In the margins of the visit by the Prince of Norway Haakon Magnus, the two men discussed areas of mutual collaboration to strengthen the Fiji-India partnership.

“We are doing quite a bit of work in the waterways and environment department - mainly in the area of waste disposal, recycling of waste compost and we want to further develop our biodiversity,” Minister Reddy highlighted.

“At the moment TERI is involved with us on biodiversity works and we want them to expand their technical assistance with us,” he said.

“That expansion will include working on catchment management, developing new policies for catchment management and assist us in the work that we are currently undertaking on mapping of waterways,” Minister Reddy added.

He explained that he is looking to strengthen capacity building and in time start hosting conferences which are vital in combating climate change.

“We discussed on two conferences to be hosted in Fiji - “Oceans and Rivers” and “Environment” - so now we will exchange communication to see convergence on a date, look at the basic format and then collaborate with the Fiji National University and the University of the South Pacific for a better alliance,” Minister Reddy said.

“I think Fiji will benefit a lot by engaging with TERI as it has the technical expertise and they have done this work in India and have experience outside India as well.”

The Director General of TERI said they are delighted that to move ahead to look at innovative ways of both developing and implementing new programs.

“We are proud of the partnership that we have created with the Government of Fiji and believe that useful and effective outcomes only come out of real partnership, when both sides bring in their own learning’s and their own contributions to the table.”

Women urged to take up boat masters training

MEREANI GONEDUA

WOMEN can do anything if they set their mind to it and nothing should deter them from trying to achieve their dreams.

These were the sentiments made by Merelita Cenaweka, 24, who was the only female participant during a Boat Masters and Class 6 license training held in Nailaga, Ba.

The two weeks training which was organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in conjunction with the Maritime Authority of Fiji saw 114 participants in which Ms Cenaweka was the only female.

“We all know that this is a male-dominated field however I would like to encourage all women out there to also try this out. Nothing is impossible if we put our mind to it,” she said.

“Being a school dropout I promised myself that I would try my best and achieve other things and this is just the first step in achieving my dream of owning my own fibreglass boat and assisting my family financially.

Ms Cenaweka acknowledged the Government for the many opportunities given to women like her and has also called on other women to get out of their comfort zone and make use of the opportunities given.

In officiating at the certificate presentation, Minister for Youth and Sports Parveen Kumar said the training is in response to the demand for boat licenses in alignment with the Maritime Safety Authority of Fiji’s restriction on boat operators without a license.

Minister Kumar said it was also the result of extensive consultations with various stakeholders in the shipping and transportation industry hence the need for the country to comply with international laws and standards concerning safety at sea for sea fearers.



Merelita Cenaweka receives her certificate from the Minister for Youth and Sports Parveen Kumar after completing a Boat Masters and Class 6 license training conducted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Ba.

“Safety is paramount, whilst safety is everyone’s responsibility a lot of emphasis has been placed upon the captain who is overall accountable for the safety of all passengers. And ensuring that the vessel and operations is compliant and meets the required standards prescribed by law and applying best practices to ensure prevention of incidents and fatalities at sea.”

Minister Kumar stressed that the Government in providing the Boat master and Class 6 licensing training they are giving Fijians an opportunity to use their license for “self-income generation”.

“It is our hope that by generating income, it will inspire you to do more for your family and community to a sustainable way of life.

He also assured youths that the Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports priority is to reduce unemployment, create opportunities for youths and Fijians to be entrepreneurially successful, contribute to the reduction of poverty and to promote economic growth.

Fiji, Japan work on clean water system

EMI KOROITANOVA

TO meet its commitment for Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), the Fijian Government is working with the Japanese Government on recognizing the Ecological Purification System (EPS) as an answer.

SDG 6, as part of the 17 SDGs established by the United Nations in 2015, calls for clean water and sanitation for all people.

The EPS is a chemical-free technology to make safe, delicious and drinkable water where a total of \$1.4 million has been allocated for the construction of 30 new EPS plants by the Government in the 2018/2019 financial year.

This is after the Government had initiated the project requesting for technical support to the



Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6), as part of the 17 SDGs established by the United Nations in 2015, calls for clean water and sanitation for all people.

Japanese Government which saw Professor Nobutada Nakamoto being dispatched to Fiji.

Professor Nakamoto, who is from Shinshu University in Japan, initiated the technology for the purpose of rural water supply. Nakini village is amongst 100 villages where the EPS had been set up as of November 2018.

Nakini clan headman Eroni Koroiwaca was amongst the many

participants at the EPS Public workshop which was recently held at The University of the South Pacific.

Mr Koroiwaca said that the situation of water had become so bad that the villagers would end up in the hospital after drinking contaminated water.

“We were blessed last year when the assistance was provided to us villagers,” he said.

He added that three tanks had been installed in the village.

“There is a need to connect the pipe system to all the homes because we have seen the benefits.”

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Jone Usamate officiated at the workshop and said that his Ministry had already taken timely steps towards providing clean and safe water to the rural communities.



Hard work pays off for single mum

EPARAMA WARUA

TO say single mothers have their work cut out for them is an understatement but to see them taking on the trials and tribulations of life in their stride with a smile is what sets Sangita Devi apart.

Ms Devi of Nausori is a hardworking and courageous mother of five whom she raised single handedly after her husband left her during the time she needed support.

She decided to take up learning at the Makoi Women's Vocational Training Center (MWVTC) where she took tailoring classes thereby gaining formal qualification as she was very good in sewing.

Joining the training center, with her children all attending school, she sacrificed a lot everyday having to meet the demands and provide for her kids.

"It was very hard for me, especially when early in the morning I have to send my kids to school, and at the same time prepare myself to go to school too.

"Sometimes there is no family time with my kids, and it's very hard to provide for my chil-



Sangita Devi.

dren as you know kids have different needs," Ms Devi said.

With all this sacrifices and hardships, she graduated from MWVTC and is keen to operate as a professional tailor.

Recently Ms Devi was chosen by the MWVTC and the Ministry of Women to be a recipient of the Courts Mother's Day Promotion, rewarding the hard work of moms in our society.

For so long, the single mother prayed and wanted a sewing machine and is today count-

ing her blessings for she will be receiving a brand new Singer sewing machine.

"I was very happy when they say I will be receiving this equipment today. I thanked God and I just cried because it's like he answered my prayers. He answered my prayer by giving me the machine I was longing for, for so long."

I am thankful for the gifts I have received today and I am honoured to be part of this great Mother's Day Promotion, especially Courts Fiji Ltd for honouring stay-at-home mothers; who hardly get the recognition they deserve. I want to thank the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation for her presence and support as well as the Makoi Vocational Training Centre for choosing me to be here."

"It is a great privilege to be a mother today, it is so amazing and I would like to thank God for all the Mothers in our lives".

Ms Devi lives by her favorite bible verse 'Jeremiah 29: 11; "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

'Honour mums, treat them well'

EMI KOROITANOVA

FAMILIES around the country have been urged to treat mothers well everyday rather than just one of the year that has been dedicated to them.



Ilisapeci Korobulileka.

This was the message from the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Mereseini Vuniwaqa as she officiated at the Ministry's joint initiative with Courts Fiji Limited at the launching of the biggest Mother's Day promotion.

Minister Vuniwaqa called on all Fijian families to think beyond Mother's Day to treat the women of the house in a special way.

"Far too many times, we deprive them of opportunities to realize their full opportunities," she said.

"When women are disrespected, abused and humiliated in their own homes by the person or people she loves, the impact lasts for generations."

Minister Vuniwaqa added that Fijian families must change the harmful ways in which mothers are being treated on a daily basis.

"We need to change the harmful ways we treat our mothers on a daily basis because it gives our children a wrong ideology about the role and place of a mother in her home."

Two of the lucky mothers who are part of the promotion, Unaisi Tinai and Ilisapeci Korobulileka, were given tools of their trade.

Mrs Tinai is a mother of six who did her baking on a kerosene stove to sell her baked goods in her neighbourhood.

She graduated from a course in pastry and cooking at Makoi Women Vocational Training Centre (MWVTC).

"This is just a foundation for me to start off with my business and to become something in life, to make a difference out there," Mrs Tinai said.

Meanwhile, Mrs Korobulileka, who is married with three children, graduated from a programme in tailoring.

She echoed Mrs Tinai sentiments as she will be receiving a Singer brand sewing machine.

"I didn't have any sewing machine, so I'm happy about it," Mrs. Korobulileka said.

"This will help me with my business as I'll do sewing and some other small things like screen-printing."

Support for special kids delights dad

FELIX LESINAIVALU

AFATHER of two was pleased to see how his children were supported by the Sigatoka School for Special Education.

Moses Fiu, who hails from Rotuma and lives in Kulukulu, Sigatoka attended the World Autism Awareness Day with his wife, Mary Fiu, and two sons at the Sigatoka School for Special Education grounds.

His two sons Moses Fiu Junior and George Fiu are both autistic and he says it has been a challenge as parents to look after them.

"My eldest son is unable to talk, my second son is able to talk but he repeats what we say," Mr Fiu said.

"I'm grateful to the Ministry of Education for allowing our children to attend school."

Mr Fiu highlighted that he has seen improvements in his children's behaviour since they started attending the special school.

"I understand that it is a challenge for teachers to support children with special needs and I am grateful for their help."

"It takes a lot of time, but they tend to pick up so slowly and learn a lot of things at a slower pace.

He believes that World Autism Day should not be a day about



Moses Fiu with his two sons Junior and George Fiu at the World Autism Awareness Day held at Sigatoka Special School grounds.

Photo: FELIX LESINAIVALU

autistic children but for all special children.

Mr Fiu said he was impressed how there has been an improvement of how people with special needs are treated these days.

Officiating at the event Minister for Education Rosy Akbar stressed that the Ministry was strengthening inclusive education options for children with disabili-

ties and their families across Fiji, while continuing to support the services that special schools provide to children with particular and complex disabilities, such as autism.

"This year, a total of 1,149 children with disabilities are attending our special schools, 143 are in the inclusive schools, totalling 1,292 students with special edu-

cational needs," Minister Akbar said

"Sigatoka alone has recorded 23 autistic children giving the highest number of students enrolled in the Western Division."

She said children with autism being included in family, community and school life helps a child with autism develop to his or her full potential.

USP, ADB model will boost economy

ROMEKA KUMARI

A SOFTWARE has been developed that will better equip analyst and economists to make predictions on the economy as it allows them to see impact of policies or shocks on the different sectors.

This is the newly developed University of the South Pacific's Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) model and was brought to the public's attention during a workshop on Strengthening Economic Modelling and Policy Research in Fiji held in conjunction with Centre of the Economic Policy and Modelling (CEPM) at USP and Pacific Sub-regional Office of the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

CGE model is software developed by USP's School of Economics and Centre for Economic Policy and Modelling which helps to solve economy related mathematical equations efficiently.

Senior Lecturer and Academic Advisor for USP's School of Economics Dr Rup Singh said, "CGE model solves 8086 equations in one go and give the results efficiently. It also helps policymakers to make better decisions on limited understanding of the economy".

ADB Director Masayuki Tachiri says it is very important to have a scientific and database policy research to advance Fiji and the rest of the Pacific.

"The Centre is tasked to conduct high quality research to help deal with economic challenges which many Pacific island countries like Fiji face," Mr Tachiri said.

Deputy Government Statistician at the Fiji Bureau of Statistics Kamueli Naiqama said the bureau will continue to support the CGE.

"The Fiji Bureau of Statistics will continue to support the CGE with the provision of data for economic modelling and policy research in Fiji," Mr Naiqama said.

He added that there is need to quantify data and the ways to measure data which reflects the intended ways of modelling and research in the economy.

"Competentness, timeliness, availability, the atmosphere and the collaboration of data is need to be looked on while engaging with stakeholders regularly when looking at the common goals of the economy to benefit all," Mr Naiqama said.

Acting director of CEPM, Professor Sothea Oum said the CGE will perform simulation on overall economy, sectors and industries in Fiji and the Pacific.

"The underlying system has very strong micro-economic foundations and uses optimization theory. The models replicates on how markets work to determine price and quantity effectively," Dr Oum said.

National job centre registers 8000 Fijians

NANISE NEIMILA

THERE are approximately 8000 Fijians currently registered under the Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations' National Employment Centre (NEC).

Ministry's deputy secretary Viliame Baleidrokadroka said the centre provides three employment agencies namely the Fiji Volunteer Scheme, Foreign Employment Service and the Formal Employment Service.

Formal employment focuses on the domestic employment services and volunteer scheme focuses on getting employment opportunities

for retirees especially teachers and nurses

"Foreign employment services is where you can see a number of our Fijians going for overseas employment in Australia and New Zealand under the seasonal workers programme.

"At the centre our main focus is to provide employment to the marginalised in our society so they can come to the centre and be assisted. We can assist in building their capacity within the workforce."

"One major setback for us at the centre is trying to properly gauge the status of people coming through the system and to be able to provide real-time data on their movement

within the job market."

Mr Baleidrokadroka also highlighted the new signing of the Pacific Labour Scheme with Australia with Fiji becoming the 10th nation to join the labour mobility initiative.

Under the program, Fijian workers can now undertake non-seasonal work for up to three years, in rural and regional Australia.

"Fiji has participated for a number of years in the Seasonal Worker Programme, providing employment to almost 1000 Fijian workers since 2012."

"Fijian workers will now have access to employment and skills development opportunities through the Pacific Labour Scheme."



Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Mereseini Vuniwaqa with participants at the opening of the Beijing Platform for Action +25 Review Forum at Grand Pacific Hotel. Photo: FELIX LESINAIVALU

Push for equal participation of women

FELIX LESINAIVALU

LACK of women's equal participation in decision making from community to organisational levels needs to improve.

This was highlighted by Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Mereseini Vuniwaqa while speaking at the opening of the Beijing Platform for Action +25 Review Forum at Grand Pacific Hotel recently.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) is a landmark document for advancing the rights of women and gender equality worldwide.

"A forum such as this is crucial because we owe it to our women to give them a life free of discrimination, violence and unequal treatment," she said.

"The BPA is a landmark document for advancing the rights of women and gender equality worldwide."

Minister Vuniwaqa also said the BPA imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices.

"The BPA has connected and reinforced the activism of women's movements on a global scale and since then, governments, civil society and the public have translated the BPA's promises into concrete changes in individual countries, including Fiji."

She highlighted that this year Fiji is set to submit the Beijing Platform for Action +25 Progress Report which shall include an assessment of current challenges that affect the execution of the agreements in the BPA.

"We are now in the process of engaging a Writer Consultant to assist in the consolidation of Fiji's Review on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action +25 Report."

Minister Vuniwaqa said by the end of forum there would be a steering community in place so we can our progress as a nation in terms of women empowerment.



Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation Mereseini Vuniwaqa with the ministry's permanent secretary Jennifer Poole at Grand Pacific Hotel. Photo: FELIX LESINAIVALU



Participants at the Beijing Platform for Action +25 Review Forum at Grand Pacific Hotel. Photo: FELIX LESINAIVALU

FijiFocus



FIJI CHAIRS WORLD
BANK'S SMALL STATES
ROUNDTABLE

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FIJIANS
REGISTERED
WITH NATIONAL
EMPLOYMENT
CENTRE



WOMEN
URGED TO
TAKE UP
BOAT MASTERS
TRAINING

13



President Major General (Ret'd) Jioji Konrote with players and officials of the Fiji Under-20 Men's rugby team after presenting their itatau at the State House in Suva. Photo: ERONI VALILI

'Be good envoys'

PRESIDENT MAKES PLEA TO U20 RUGBY SIDE

RUPENI VATUBULI

“BE good Ambassadors, on and off the field and always display good sportsmanship by accepting victory with humility and defeat graciously”

These are the words of the President Major General (Ret'd) Jioji Konrote at the itatau ceremony by the Fiji Under-20 men's rugby team to the Junior World Championship.

President Konrote congratulated the 28 players and six officials for making it to the team.

“On behalf of our rugby passionate and loving nation, we commend and congratulate you on being selected into our national U20 team this year – well done!”

President Konrote highlighted that the U20 men's rugby team are the third team to visit and present their itatau in this refurbished and renovated Conservatory – following in the footsteps were the National Team for Touch Rugby to the 2019 Touch Rugby World Cup, in Putrajaya, Malaysia who presented their itatau yesterday.

“Prior to that, was the national team of Special Athletes (People with Determination) who performed exceptionally well and created history during the recent Special Olympic Games held in Abu Dhabi last month.”

“These “People with Determination”, our special athletes created history and made us all proud to be Fijians as did our gallant, victorious and globe-trotting National Sevens Rugby Team, creating history by winning the much coveted Hong Kong 7s Championship trophy five years in a row recently.”

President Konrote reminded the players to be fit and well by maintaining a healthy lifestyle – by eating well and exercising daily as the Government had been spent over \$400 million annually on Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) related ailments.

“These much needed funds that could be directed into other sectors like education and sports to ensure that you our young athletes of today can continue to represent our country as fit, well trained and motivated Fijians in years to come” he further elaborated.



Fiji Under-20 rugby player Osea Natoga greets President Major General (Ret'd) Jioji Konrote as his team members look on at the State House in Suva. Photo: ERONI VALILI