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## Prime Minister Rabuka meets New Zealand counterpart at Beehive



Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka made his first State visit to New Zealand earlier this month. At the Parliament House, Prime Minister Rabuka was accorded a traditional Maori welcome before inspecting a guard of honour. The Prime Minister and his delegation were received by the New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins. After reviewing the 50-men and women guard of honour by the New Zealand Defence Force, Prime Minister Rabuka was then escorted into the Beehive where he held bilateral meetings with PM Hipkins and his Cabinet. Prime Minister Rabuka’s last official visit to New Zealand was in 1998.

## Upward trajectory of economic projection for this year

By SHEENAL CHARAN

OUR economy is recovering fast and is projected to grow by around eight per cent with a strong rebound in tourism which will return to pre-pandemic levels this year. This has been highlighted by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Biman Prasad at the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on the Fiji Economy: Building Sustainable Prosperity Together organised by Dialogue Fiji at the Holiday Inn in Suva recently.

DPM Prasad said the investment levels are picking up with a pipeline of major projects that are getting off the ground and Fiji’s foreign exchange levels remain strong. “Our financial sector is sound, liquidity levels are more than adequate to support investments, remittances have crossed the billion-dollar mark last year and is increasing further,” he said. “On the fiscal front, our revenue levels are stabilising quickly, and debt levels are being put on a sustainable path. We need to build on this momentum, and we are confident that we should soon

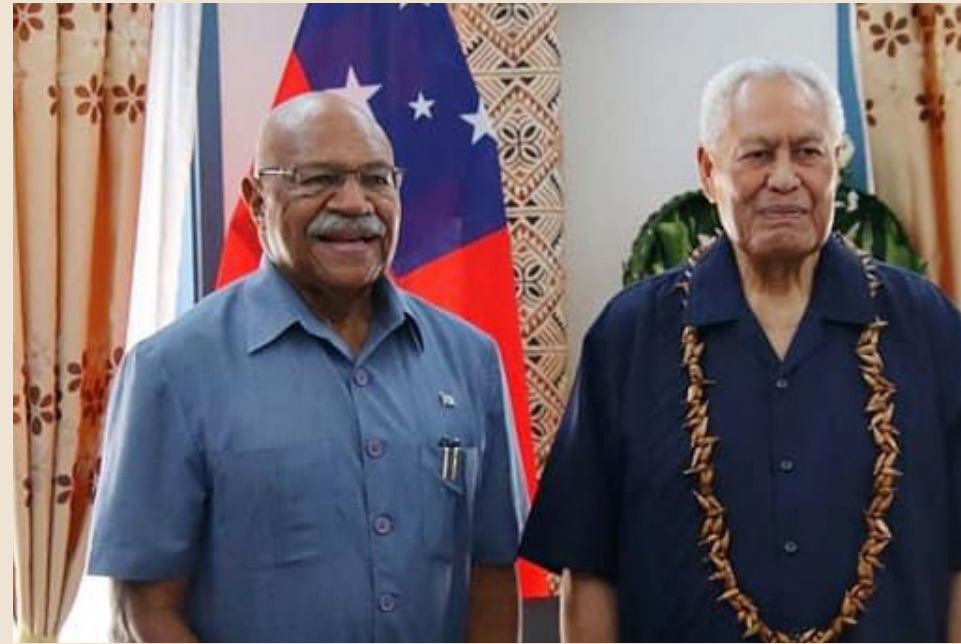
get things under control.” DPM Prasad added that while there are a lot of optimism and confidence in the country, risks and challenges also exist. “We have a major challenge with skill loss due to migration and underinvestment in our people over the years. We remain vulnerable to natural disasters and climatic events and as our recent history has shown the impact of these natural disasters can be catastrophic on the economy, infrastructure, and socio-economic conditions,” DPM Prasad highlighted.

“The global economy is slowing down with recent slowdown in Australia and New Zealand that will affect us. We will need to take some tough decisions in the upcoming budget, but we just don’t have many options. But that’s how the world works. There will always be challenges and we need to manage it.” DPM Prasad said he is confident that the upcoming 2023-2024 National Budget will lay the foundation for a new style of inclusive governance, inclusive economic and social policies and fiscally responsible economy.





# The world has taken advantage of us: PM Rabuka tells Pacific Leaders



Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka meets with the Head of State of Samoa, O le Ao o le Malo Tuimaleali'ifano Va'aleto'a Sualauvi II during a visit to Samoa recently. Photo: SUPPLIED

PRIME Minister Sitiveni Rabuka has reminded Pacific leaders of the achievements the region can collectively attain

should they work together.

Addressing leaders at the Taumeasina Hotel recently, Prime Minister Rabuka reminded them that Pacific Island

countries should capitalise on their collective potential.

“You will probably recall that I mentioned in Papua New Guinea, the Commonwealth of the Pacific we have so much in common that we have not taken advantage of, while the world has been taking advantage of them (Pacific). “As we come together to celebrate household achievements like this, let us not forget the bigger things that we can achieve together as strong committed small nations of the Pacific. Together we’re big, together we’re strong, together we’re a force, the rest of the world to reckon with.”

Prime Minister Rabuka told leaders that Samoa can be looked to for inspiration.

“You have been a great shining example of national unity, I’m so grateful that you highlighted in the Declaration this morning; Samoa, Christian nation built

on Christian principles of loving God and loving your fellow men and women, all those principles you can never go wrong.”

Foreign leaders present at the lunch included the Ulu o Tokelau Faipule Kelihiano Kalolo; Governor of American Samoa, Lemanu Peleti Mauga; Congresswoman of the U.S. Federal House of Representatives, Uifaatali Aumua Amata Coleman; New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister, Carmel Sepuloni, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, Samiu Vaipulu and Cook Islands Deputy Prime Minister, Robert Tapaitau.

Leaders were hosted by the Prime Minister of Samoa, Fiamē Naomi Mata’afa.

The Independent State of Samoa Head of State, O le Ao o le Malo Tuimaleali’ifano Va’aleto’a Sualauvi II was also in attendance.

## Re-opening of Embassies in Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and U.S.A; Establishment of an Embassy in Israel



Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka held a talanoa session with the Fiji community during a visit to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea last month. Photo: SUPPLIED

Cabinet agreed that the re-opening of three Embassies in Kuala Lumpur, Port Moresby and Washington, and the establishment of a new Embassy in Israel, be considered in the 2023 – 2024 national budget.

Following the global COVID-19 pandemic, a total of five Missions (Washington DC, Seoul, Port Moresby, Brussels and Kuala Lumpur) were closed as part of Government’s 2020/2021 budgetary response.

Fiji’s engagement with these countries is currently undertaken by other missions on accreditation arrangements.

With the opening of borders and return to normal activity around the globe, there is a need to comprehensively expand Fiji’s global presence. In addition, Fiji has maintained amicable relations with the State of Israel, through bilateral cooperation on peace and security, and areas such as Agriculture.

Our cooperation with Israel is currently facilitated through the Israel Embassy in Canberra, and through the Office of the Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations (PRUN) in New York.

The establishment of an embassy in Israel is a commitment of the People’s Coalition Government.

Inauguration of Fiji Trade Commission North America Office in San Francisco

Cabinet was updated on the inauguration of Fiji’s Trade Commission North America Office on 29 May 2023 in San Francisco.

The Office serves as a vital link between Fiji and the North American market, connecting businesses, investors, and our diaspora with Government, agencies, and businesses back home.

The North America Trade Commission will also provide passport services to Fiji citizens in San Francisco and the West Coast of the United States.

Currently, passport services are offered out of the Fiji Embassy in Washington DC, and the Embassy Passports Team occasionally visits the Trade Commission for a two-week period to conduct mobile passport enrolment service.

This mobile passport enrolment service has been offered at the Trade Commission three times over the past year, and appointments have been fully booked each time. There is currently a waitlist for the next round of mobile passport enrolment services.

## Code of Practice for Wood Processing Facilities (Sawmills and Log Yards)

Cabinet approved a Code of Practice for Wood Processing Facilities. The Code of Practice is to enhance the efficiency in the overall sawmilling and log yard operations.

The Ministry of Forestry will oversee the implementation of the Code of Practice.

## Proposal to increase Gravel Royalty Rate

Cabinet agreed that consultations be undertaken on the proposal to increase current royalty rates on sand and gravel, clay and soil, rock, topsoil and river spalls extracted as per Regulation 11 of the iTaukei Land Trust (Gravel Regulations) 1998 under the iTaukei Land Trust Act 1940.

The rates will be finalised following the consultation process.

## Policy Framework on Live Coral and Cultured Live Rock Trade

Cabinet approved the policy framework for live coral and cultured live rock trade.

The policy framework allows for coral and cultured live rock trade to be permitted under strict guidelines and conditions for companies to ensure sustainability.

The CITES Scientific Council and CITES Management Authority will convene to decide on the trade quota based on scientific advice provided by the Ministry of Fisheries.

Necessary legislative amendments will be made in line with the policy framework before companies can proceed with the export of coral and cultured live rock trade.

## Review of the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission

Cabinet considered a proposal for a review of the iTaukei Lands and Fisheries Commission (TLFC).

TLFC plays a significant role on the iTaukei vanua governance system, and it needs to be transformed into a robust institution that responds effectively and efficiently to the needs of its stakeholders including Government ministries, departments, and statutory bodies.

The strategic review will be coordinated by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs.

## Lifting of the Sea Cucumber Ban and Revised Criteria for Operators

Cabinet approved the lifting of the ban on harvesting of sea cucumber for a period of six months commencing from 1 July, 2023.

The Ministry of Fisheries will consult with Divisional Commissioners on the issuance of harvesting licenses.

The Ministry of Fisheries will work in partnership with the Ministry iTaukei Affairs, Culture, Heritage and Arts will carry out general awareness pertaining to the implementation of this decision.



# Fiji dedicated to boosting digital ecosystem

By AZARIA FAREEN

DIGITAL and technical capabilities are essential drivers of socio-economic development as it provides opportunities for businesses to expand their reach, access new markets, and increase productivity.

This was highlighted by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications, Manoa Kamikamica, while speaking at the 23rd Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) Policy and Regulatory Forum recently.

“The ever- evolving nature of digital technologies has greatly impacted and continues to influence how people interact, how businesses operate, and economies are configured,” Deputy Prime Minister Kamikamica said.

“Fiji values the role that APT plays in enhancing visibility of our regionally shared goals, priorities and challenges, and that is why this forum is important because it gives us the opportunity to discuss, engage with and learn from each other, consolidate our common positions, and drive our collective priorities.”

“For citizens, digital technologies offer a more convenient, efficient and transparent way of accessing services and engaging with their government,” DPM Kamikamica added.

The Government remaining dedicated to enhancing its digital ecosystem in order to facilitate economic growth through strategic and multi-stakeholder partnerships, fostering digital entrepreneurship, promoting e-commerce, developing digital skills, and embarking on smart island initiatives.

“As part of our connectivity efforts, Fiji’s joined the International Telecommunications Union Smart Islands Initiative and we have recently completed our needs assessment,” he said.

“We have identified Rotuma, a volcanic island of approximately 43 square kilometers with less than 2000 people and located 590km from Nadi – for this initiative. I am excited to see the innovative approach to deliver connectivity and new ICT-enabled services to one of our smaller maritime



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications, Manoa Kamikamica, with Asia Pacific Telecommunity Secretary-General, Masanori Kondo, during the 23rd Asia-Pacific Telecommunity (APT) Policy and Regulatory Forum that Fiji hosted recently. Photo: MEREANI GONEDUA

communities.”

“The accelerated adoption of digital technologies has resulted in significant growth in eCommerce and mobile financial transactions and the growth of the Business Process Outsourcing industry which thrived during the COVID-19 pandemic,” he added.

Today, Fiji has a robust and modern network infrastructure that allows businesses to communicate and collaborate remotely, improving productivity and efficiency. This is underpinned by the deregulation of the telecommunications market, installation of fiber optic cables for international connectivity, the expansion of 4G cellular networks, the development of wireless broadband internet service, and the recent onset of 5G trials.

“The use of mobile e-wallets continues to experience exponential growth driven by bulk disbursements by Government and other institutions, inward remittances through the channel and surging customer demand for the service as reflected by cash deposits and payments,” Minister Kamikamica said.

“We are mindful that the correct implementation of digital transformation ensures that tailored e-services are delivered with the aim of enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accessibility,” he added.

# Unwavering confidence in country



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Professor Biman Prasad with members of the public at the Vunimoli budget consultation held in Labasa recently. Photo: JOSIA RALAGO

By JOSIA RALAGO

DEPUTY Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Professor Biman Prasad expressed his unwavering confidence in the measures being undertaken to address the current state of the country.

After six months in Government, Deputy Prime Minister Prasad, while speaking at the Vunimoli budget consultation in Labasa recently, reassured farmers and members of the public that positive changes are on the horizon.

He emphasised the significance of the upcoming budget, recognising it as a crucial milestone.

Deputy Prime Minister Prasad underscored the importance of relying on accurate information, cautioning the audience against the circulation of false news aimed at tarnishing the reputation of the Coalition Government.

Refuting various rumours, he categorically stated that social welfare benefits would not be reduced, and education would remain accessible to all students, free of charge.

Moreover, DPM Prasad assured school administrations that they would be granted autonomy to raise funds in addition to the grants provided by the Government.

He conveyed the Government’s intent

to foster collaboration and empower local communities.

DPM Prasad expressed the desire to work closely with community leaders, such as *Turaga ni Koro’s*, *Roko Tui’s*, Provincial administrators, Advisory Councillors, Growers Councillors, and Town Councillors, as they possess valuable insight into the community’s affairs.

Recognising the limitations of dictating policies, he emphasised the need for a collaborative approach to address the nation’s challenges.

Furthermore, the Minister highlighted the positive trajectory of the economy, with a strong rebound observed in the tourism sector, nearing pre-pandemic levels.

As a testament to this, the growth forecast has been revised upwards.

The Government’s commitment to the well-being of the people was reiterated, with a particular focus on supporting sectors such as agriculture and tourism development in Vanua Levu.

In conclusion, DPM Biman Prasad’s address provided reassurance and optimism, underscoring the Government’s dedication to the nation’s progress and promising collaborative efforts with communities and sectors critical to the country’s development.

# Water projects commissioned on Koro Island

By JOSEFA ULUILAKEBA

THE village’s of Mudu and Nacamaki on Koro Island now have access to clean drinking water following the implementation of an Ecological Purification System (EPS) in both villages.

During the commissioning of the projects last week, the Minister for Rural, Maritime Development, and Disaster Management, Sakiasi Ditoka, emphasised that the implementation of these projects was not only providing clean water but also safeguarding the villagers’ basic rights to safe and clean water.

The Minister stated, “This is a significant step forward for you all, as clean water is now accessible. These developments will bring about a change in lifestyle and improve the health of the villagers. The

new water system also eliminates the era of water-borne diseases and the struggle to find clean water for daily usage.”

Highlighting the importance of water as a fundamental societal need and a driving force for development, Minister Ditoka commended the resilience of the villagers and their support towards Divine Mountains Company Limited, the contracted company responsible for carrying out the development work in the villages.

The Minister also stressed the importance of collaboration between the government, the people, the private sector, and civil organizations in undertaking such development projects.

Mudu Village headman, Ilesia Butuivalu, expressed relief and gratitude to the Government’s assistance, stating that the provision of clean water has ended the days of dry taps and dirty water during



The Minister for Rural, Maritime Development, and Disaster Management, Sakiasi Ditoka, while commissioning water projects on Koro Island, highlighted that clean water brings with it a change in lifestyle and improvement to the health. Photo: JOSEFA ULUILAKEBA

heavy rain. He looked forward to improved health and better living conditions for the villagers.

Selesitino Naqarase, the village headman of Nacamaki, shared similar sentiments, expressing gratitude to the Government for alleviating the major water problem they faced.

Mr Naqarase highlighted the noticeable difference in taste between stored water and the water from the EPS system, underscoring the positive impact on their

daily lives.

The implementation of the EPS in Mudu and Nacamaki Villages incurred costs of \$45,000 per project.

The EPS system utilises natural ecological processes without the use of chemicals to produce germ-free safe drinking water. It consists of three Rota mold tanks with a volume of 2,700 liters each. The first tank contains gravel, the second tank contains sand, and the third tank serves as storage for purified water.



# Cabinet makes decision on key issues



An investment of \$16,000 became the source jubilation for women of Vuinaqulutu village after the Minister for Fisheries and Forests, Kalaveti Ravu recently commissioned the footpath in the interior of Macuata recently. The project was funded by the village women's group, Sede Na Qele Women's Cooperative. **Photo: JOSAIA RALAGO**

## Update on Ease of Doing Business Project

Cabinet was updated on the outcomes of the comprehensive review of the digitisation of business processes in Government.

The digitisation process commenced in 2017, and the inception of the bizFIJI portal (now known as businessNOW FIJI) in 2019, provided for the first time a one-stop-shop information platform on starting a business, construction permits, paying taxes, to name a few, on one digital platform.

It provides links to key Government e-services and is regularly updated.

The Singapore Corporation Enterprise (SCE) was engaged to undertake the Business Review Process in 2018 and development of bizFIJI Portal in 2019.

Following the launch of bizFIJI Portal, the next phase of the reform project is to establish an online integration platform called Fiji's Integrated Licenses and Permits Approval System (FILPAS) for approval processes for Starting a Business and Obtaining a Construction Permit, as a starting point for overall improvements and automation of business operating licences.

## Increase in Manpower – Republic of Fiji Military Forces Engineers Regiment

Cabinet agreed that the proposal to increase the staff establishment of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) Engineers Regiment be considered through the normal budgetary process.

The increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters in Fiji exacerbate the problem of manpower shortage in the Regiment, thus the proposal to increase the establishment.

The increase will be subject to the normal budgetary process.

## Implementation of Recommendations of the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards

Cabinet approved

The CAS observed serious allegations concerning violation of basic civil liberties, including arrests and assaults, and restrictions of freedom of association, and called on the Fiji Government to undertake the following:

- i. refrain from interfering in the designation of the representatives of social partners on tripartite bodies;
- ii. reconvene the Employment Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) without delay in order to start a legislative reform process;
- iii. complete without further delay the full legislative reform process as agreed under the Joint Implementation Report (JIR) which was signed under the Tripartite Agreement on 29 January 2016;
- iv. refrain from anti-union practices, including arrests, detentions, violence, intimidation, harassment and interference;
- v. ensure that workers' and employers' organisations are able to exercise their rights to freedom of association, freedom of assembly and speech without undue interference by the public authorities; and
- vi. ensure that normal judicial procedures and due process are guaranteed to workers' and employers' organisations and their members.

The People's Coalition Government has made significant

progress to rectify the issues highlighted in the CAS report. In view of this, the DCM visit will be deferred to allow for full implementation of recommendations.

## Allowance for Liuliu ni Yavusa position holders

Cabinet agreed that the proposal for an allowance for the Liuliu ni Yavusa (LNY) be subject to the normal budgetary process.

The Liuliu ni Yavusa are an important component of traditional iTaukei institutions under the Vanua governance structure.

There are 6,220 chiefly titles in Fiji; 2,892 have been formally installed and confirmed while 3,328 are vacant.

Of the 1,375 Liuliu ni Yavusa positions, 643 (46 percent) have been formally installed and confirmed by the iTaukei Land and Fisheries Commission (ILFC) while 732 (54 percent) are vacant.

The proposal to strengthen traditional governance as a significant component of Vanua development, is to recognize the significant role of Liuliu ni Yavusa through a monthly allowance for those confirmed by the ILFC.

It is anticipated that the decision will encourage various Yavusa to formally install their Liuliu ni Yavusa. The ILFC stands prepared to facilitate formal installations within the current protocols and procedures to avoid disputes.

The cost implications will be considered through the normal budgetary process.

## c Revival of Village Improvement Scheme

Cabinet endorsed the reactivation of the Village Improvement Scheme (VIS).

The scheme was initiated in 2001 to provide assistance for basic infrastructural development including evacuation facilities as well as drainage and sanitation improvements to raise living standards in iTaukei villages.

The scheme is intended to address the need to improve basic infrastructure, basic drainage and sanitation requirements.

The iTaukei Affairs Board is currently undertaking the second village profiling exercise. Data from the village profiling exercise will inform the development of an Integrated Village Development Plan (IVDP).

The design and implementation of the VIS will be aligned to the IVDP. It will include the identification of villages in dire need of assistance and a revised VIS Guideline that inculcates the TOR, Criteria and a streamlined approval process.

There will be an inter-Ministry officials committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary for iTaukei Affairs that will screen all applications and recommend projects for assistance to the Minister for iTaukei Affairs who is the approving authority for VIS assistance.

Funding for the scheme will be considered through the annual budget process.

## Review of the iTaukei Land Trust Board

Cabinet considered a proposal for the review of the iTaukei Land Trust Board (TLTB).

Recent reviews focused on improving operational efficiency and work processes. This resulted in strengthening TLTB's corporate governance, implementing a risk management framework, complaints management system, adoption of digital transformation models and supporting government's socio-economic and infrastructure projects.

The intent of the review is to enhance participation and promoting economic empowerment of the landowning units, in TLTB's trusteeship- role.



Fiji's Government delegation to the International Labour Conference (ILC) Plenary at the 111th Session, Minister for Employment, Agni Deo Singh as the head of the delegation, the chief executive officer of the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation (FCEF) as employers' representative, Kameli Batiweti and the general secretary of the Fiji Trades Union Congress, Felix Anthony as workers' representative. **Photo: SUPPLIED**





Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications, Manoa Kamikamica visited tourism projects during a tour to the Northern Division recently. **Photo: AZARIA FAREEN**

units, in TLTB's trusteeship- role.

The 2023 review will be guided by the following principles:

- Sustainability – all institutions, projects or programs must derive measurable returns (financial or social, etc);
- Accountability – this requires proper governance and includes defining the qualification of trustees and other appointments;
- Inclusiveness – including women and youth in development; and
- Future preservation – preserving some benefits for future generations, which includes wealth creation.

The TLTB will fund the review.

#### **Fiji's Voluntary National Review Report 2023**

Cabinet approved Fiji's second Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report 2023.

The report will be submitted to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum in July 2023. Fiji presented its first VNR Report on 18 July 2019.

The VNR is a voluntary, state-led review to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The second VNR report focused on the core principals of the 2030 Global Agenda calling for a robust, voluntary, effective, transparent and participatory process.

The report reflects contributions made by all stakeholders to the attainment of the SDGs for the past four years (2019-2022), particularly that of civil society organisations (CSOs), government ministries and departments, development partners and donor agencies.

#### **Fiji Institute of Chartered Accountants (Amendment) Regulations 2023**

Cabinet approved the Fiji Institute of Chartered Accountants (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (Regulations).

The Regulations will amend Fiji Institute of Chartered Accountants Regulations 2022 which provides for the administration of the Fiji Institute of Chartered Accountants (Institute) pursuant to the Fiji Institute of Chartered Accountants Act 2021.

Regulation 24 currently provides that the quorum for a meeting of the Institute is to be 50 percent of the total number of members present and entitled to vote.

It also provides that a meeting of the Institute may be held at such times provided a written request is made by not less than 50 percent of voting members of the Institute.

This has been amended to replace 50 percent to 50 members.

#### **World Bank IDA's financing for Phase 1 of Tourism Development Programme on Vanua Levu (Multi-Phase Programmatic Approach Financing)**

Cabinet approved the Financing Agreement with the World Bank International Development Association (IDA) financing for Phase 1 of the Fiji Tourism Development

Program in Vanua Levu.

The Fiji Tourism Development Program in Vanua Levu is to improve the resilience and sustainability of the tourism industry, including short-term recovery and longer-term diversification and high-value growth, and to facilitate the execution of existing Government plans.

Phase 1 of US\$61.5 million (FJ\$136.2m) runs from year one to year six commencing from this year 2023, will set the foundations for sustainable tourism in Vanua Levu.

#### **World Bank's Business Ready (B-Ready) Report**

Cabinet approved a 'Whole of Government' approach to prepare for the World Bank Group's (WBG) Business Ready (B-Ready) Report.

The B-Ready report is a benchmarking exercise, with the objective of providing a quantitative assessment of the business environment for private sector development, to be published annually and covering most economies worldwide.

It promotes a balanced approach when assessing the business environment between:

- ease of conducting a business and broader private sector benefits;
- regulatory framework and public services;



The Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Lynda Tabuya attends the Kadavu Women's Expo at Namalata Primary School earlier this month. The Ministry will undergo a name change with "Social Protection" to replace "Poverty Alleviation".

iii. de jure laws and regulations and de facto practical implementation; and

iv. data representativeness and data comparability.

The WBG has opted for a staggered, 3-year cycle for the publication of the full set of B-Ready Report to cover 180 countries. The initial Report will cover 60 countries and be published in April 2024, thus the data collection has already begun. The second Report will cover 120 countries and will be published in April 2025. This includes the first 60 countries.

Fiji will be included in the third Report, to be published in April 2026, and covering 180 countries. This will include 120 countries from the first 2 Reports.

Data collection for Fiji will begin in 2024.

#### **Name Change for Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation**

Cabinet approved name change for the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, to the 'Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection'.

Social Protection programmes have played an important role in providing a safety net for individuals against economic risk and vulnerability, and this will now be appropriately reflected in the Ministry's new name.

The new name will be effective from 1 August 2023.

#### **Update on the Outcomes of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework Ministerial Meeting**

Cabinet was briefed on the outcome of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) Ministerial Meeting that was held in Detroit, U.S.A from 26 – 27 May 2023.

The meeting substantially concluded the IPEF Pillar 2 Supply Chain Agreement.

The Supply Chain Agreement seeks commitments to improving transparency, diversity, security, and sustainability in our supply chains to make them more resilient and well-integrated.

It looks to coordinate crisis response measures, expand cooperation to better prepare for and mitigate the effects of disruptions to better ensure business continuity; improve logistical efficiency and support and ensure access to key critical goods or services.

The text for the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement Supply Chain Agreement will now undergo legal scrubbing, following which it will be tabled in Parliament for ratification.

#### **The Tenth International Lapita Conference**

Cabinet approved financial support for the 10th Lapita Conference which will be held in Suva next week.

The Conference is being jointly organised by the Fiji Museum in collaboration with the University of the South Pacific.

The Conference will feature the gathering of renowned Pacific archaeologists who have undertaken years of research in the Pacific to present preliminary findings and the recent refinement in technological and academic enhancement to fine tuning dating results and analysis of cultural materials.



# PM Rabuka speaks at Institute of International Affairs Conference



Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka spoke to members of the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs in Auckland during his recent State visit to New Zealand. **Photo: SUPPLIED**

PRIME Minister Sitiveni Rabuka addressed members of the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs in Auckland recently where he emphasised the need to strengthen our international relations.

Prime Minister Rabuka said relations with New Zealand had strengthened over the years, especially with the signing of the Duavata Partnership Agreement last year, which signified expanded strategic cooperation.

“When we talk about international affairs, we are talking about international relations, people-to-people and government to government links,” he said.

“There have been turbulent events in the history of our independent nation whether it be political, natural disasters, health pandemics or global economic crisis, but our people have always stood together to mourn, reflect and rebuild.”

“As a Prime Minister, my main priority is the development of all Fijians, at all

levels, in all places, to ensure that Fiji reaches its full potential.”

As a region, the Prime Minister spoke on the need to continue to collaborate on regional issues underpinned by the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent to guide engagements.

“The way forward for us in Fiji is better governance not just through institutional strengthening but better coordination of the different expectations of our geo-strategic actors, private enterprise, civil society and faith-based communities,” he said.

“We understand our importance as a regional hub to serve the Pacific. I reiterate that a better Fiji is a better Pacific,” Prime Minister Rabuka said.

“We believe New Zealand is a strategic ally in ensuring the well-being and security of Fiji and the region. There are many who would love to steer us in their direction, but we must head for the clear horizon.”

(Source: Office of the Prime Minister)

# Fiji-New Zealand strengthen partnership on climate resilience, humanitarian assistance



Prime Minister and Minister responsible for Climate Change, Sitiveni Rabuka held a virtual meeting with New Zealand’s Minister for Climate Change and Associate Minister for Environment, James Shaw recently. Also in attendance were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs permanent secretary Dr Lesi Korovavala (seated on the left) and Fiji’s High Commissioner to New Zealand, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola (seated on the right). **Photo: SUPPLIED**

NEW Zealand has committed to mobilising a higher level of support for Fiji through climate financing and development of climate resilient infrastructure.

This was conveyed during a virtual meeting between the Prime Minister and Minister responsible for Climate Change, Sitiveni Rabuka and New Zealand’s Minister for Climate Change and Associate Minister for Environment, James Shaw recently.

The meeting which took place on the margins of Prime Minister Rabuka’s first official visit to New Zealand earlier this month signified the strength of cooperation and friendship between New Zealand and Fiji.

On behalf of the Government and people of Fiji, Prime Minister Rabuka conveyed his heartfelt appreciation to New Zealand for supporting Fiji through the provision of climate change financing.

On the same note, the Prime Minister acknowledged New Zealand’s contribution to the Climate Change Relocation Trust Fund which has helped relocate six of the 42 communities that need to relocate due to sea level rise and climate crisis.

Prime Minister Rabuka reaffirmed Fiji’s commitment to work with New Zealand in the implementation of the recently launched Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Planned Relocation and similarly, share the

best practices promoting climate action and environmental conservation.

He thanked New Zealand for the provision of an additional NZ\$11 million (FJ\$15.1m) towards Fiji’s climate change objectives.

“Fiji is forever grateful to New Zealand for its tremendous support which demonstrates our shared commitment to build a resilient and stronger future for our two nations and the Pacific family,” Prime Minister Rabuka added.

Discussions at the meeting also included regional cooperation in the build up to the upcoming Pacific Island Forum (PIF) Leaders meeting to be held in Cook Islands later in the year.

Fiji and New Zealand will work together to advance the region’s collective call on socio-economic sustainability, resilience and inclusivity.

In response, Minister Shaw thanked Prime Minister Rabuka for his timely visit to New Zealand to advance cooperation at all levels.

He commended Fiji’s support towards New Zealand in the aftermath of Severe Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle.

Minister Shaw said New Zealand stands ready to support Fiji’s development priorities with climate change being an important area of cooperation.

(Source: Office of the Prime Minister)

# Return on investment guaranteed in Fiji: PM Rabuka

PRIME Minister Sitiveni Rabuka has assured members of the New Zealand-Fiji Business Council that return on investment was guaranteed in Fiji.

While delivering his keynote address during a breakfast event at the Cordis Hotel in Auckland recently, he said that business in Fiji was back on track.

“Our target for business between Fiji and New Zealand is about \$2 billion. This is based on estimates of potential growth.

“At the moment the worth of business between our countries is about \$1.17b of which New Zealand enjoys the lion’s share of benefits.

“We are keen to work harder to boost our own export capacity to New Zealand.”

Referring to the tourism sector, Prime Minister Rabuka said that visitor arrivals have increased steadily since the re-opening of the borders and it was on track to returning to pre-pandemic levels.

“The key sectors contributing to the upward growth projection are the accommodation and food services, transport and storage, agriculture, manufacturing, wholesale

& retail sales, finance and insurance, administrative services, and construction and net indirect taxes,” he said.

“When we market the Fijian brand as, ‘where happiness finds you’ we mean it in every possible way.

“We are recovering.”

Prime Minister Rabuka also mentioned that Fiji’s national carrier, Fiji Airways, has recorded strong forward bookings for the next 12 months.

“I can tell you that Fiji is your best bet for a guaranteed return of investment under the watch of the Coalition Government.”

At the same time, the Prime Minister spoke about the development of rugby in Fiji.

“One of the things we definitely keep tabs on, is the success of the Fijian Drua sports team in just their second season in Super 15. I have already made public my intentions to make Fiji the sporting hub of the Pacific.

“Call it sports tourism if you want, but the Government sees great potential in boosting infrastructure for regional and international events.”

On the reforms being undertaken, the Prime Minister said Cabinet has established a Sub-Committee on the Economy and Investment and the review of regulatory and administrative processes to ease business processes.

He further highlighted that Fiji was also focusing on investing in renewable energy, among other important sectors.

“I assure you that the Coalition Government is serious about making your investment in Fiji worthwhile by cutting through the bureaucracy and red tape.”



Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka attended a New Zealand-Fiji Business Council breakfast event during his recent State visit to New Zealand. **Photo: SUPPLIED**



“This is the delivery of a promise that was made when Minister Mahuta visited earlier in the year.”



# Traditional links celebrated



**T**HE Yavusa of Cu'u in the Tikina of Tawake in Cakaudrove hosted a 'Solevu ni Marau' recently to commemorate the achievements of Cabinet Ministers who share maternal links to their Tikina. Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka has maternal links to Vatu village; the Minister for Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation, Lynda Tabuya has maternal links to Nagasauva village and; Assistant Minister for Education, Iliesa Vanawalu has maternal links to Wainika Village. Speaking at the event, Prime Minister thanked the Yavusa of Cu'u for recognising and celebrating their achievements. Prime Minister Rabuka reiterated the importance and value of 'veiwekani' (family relationship) with the vanua to help support them in carrying out their roles and endeavors for the nation.



# President Katonivere hosts Ratu Sukuna Day reception



**T**HE President, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere, hosted a reception cocktail at the State House for Cabinet ministers, members of the diplomatic corp and guests to conclude the week-long celebrations of Ratu Sukuna.

Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka and his wife, Sulueta Rabuka were also present at the reception.

The joint Republic of the Fiji Military Force (RFMF) and Naval Band provided the music while the guards performed precision marching drills and celebratory gunfire, beating of the retreat which concluded with the lowering of the national flag.





# Farmers optimistic on Government's help



Farmers like Iliyaket Ali from Sabeto, Nadi, seen here in his farm nursery, are looking forward to the assistance to the agricultural sector by the Coalition Government. **Photo: DIPESH KUMAR**

By DIPESH KUMAR

FARMERS in Sabeto, Nadi say they are increasingly optimistic that the coalition Government may give a boost to their previously agricultural invested projects. Iliyaket Ali, 63, who has been a part of the Agro-Marketing scheme, said they have been looking forward to announcements by

the new Agriculture Minister. Mr Ali said that he has been a recipient of the government grants previously, however, he believes it has gone to waste after the closure of the Agro-Marketing project. “I had taken the responsibility to build one of the largest nurseries on the Western Division on my 16-acre farm. It cost me about a \$100,000 to get it ready and the Government gave about \$2200 for posts

and \$6000 for racks.” “We were promised to get \$100,000 to expand this project and we are still waiting on it. We hope the new government will help us,” Mr Ali said “We employ around two people and we supply seedlings for bongo chilly, eggplant, and tomato,” he added Mr Ali said that keeping the nursery running was a frantic process and there are several procedures to follow to perfect the seedlings. “We use fertiliser to stop bugs and other insects from harming the seedlings. The soil also gets treated for 45 minutes to kill bacteria and to stop other unintentional plant growth,” he said He stressed that Agro-Marketing had promised to buy the seedlings, however, due to their closure he has suffered losses. “Since their closure, we have tried to sell to the local farmers. We supply to individual farmers; some ask for 2000 trays, some 500 and some 10. One tray consists of 72 seedlings which we sell for \$15. For local sales, nobody wants to give the price.” “Most farmers no longer want to plant these crops because there is no market for them. The weather affects us a lot,

especially during the rainy season, I have thrown away many trays of seedlings because of the rainy season,” he said The area advisory councillor, Vinesh Rai, highlighted that around 400 farmers are registered with the nursery and they are now looking at alternatives to sell their products. “We are looking to develop our products. Farmers have all the produce which doesn’t have any market right now. It is going to waste therefore we are in the process of developing our products,” said Mr Ali “We want to make our bongo chilli paste; however, we require assistance from the Government. We did it with the cassava but we went halfway and stopped because of machinery,” he added “In the last COVID-19 period, we supplied Agro-Marketing products worth \$793,000. Right now, we have about 200 tonnes of cassava only in Sabeto.” Mr Rai said they have everything to start the process but the machinery required to finish the product was expensive. He said they have requested assistance from the Government to help with product development machines.

# Nawaqadamu set plan for future with Govt assistance



The *turaga ni koro* of Nawaqadamu village, Ilaisa Naikasau, shows the area that will be used for implementing the future plans of their village. **Photo: MEREANI GONEDUA**

By MEREANI GONEDUA

VILLAGERS of Nawaqadamu in Kurukuru, Nadi have set aside plans to try and plant as many trees among other things in their village to assist them not only in the future but also in their daily lives. The *turaga ni koro* of Nawaqadamu village, Ilaisa Naikasau, explained that they plan to utilise every resource available to them including the various Government assistance. “We have received

assistance from the Ministry of Forestry and have already started to plant around our land. Once harvested we will then again seek assistance from the Ministry in the selling of the various plants that they have assisted us with.” “Apart from the assistance provided from the Ministry of Forestry, we’ve had other assistance rendered to us by the Government to help assist with our everyday life.” Mr Naikasau said that they are always grateful for any assistance provided to them as it would not only help them now but will also assist

with their future needs. “We have had visits from various Government departments conducting awareness on the services and assistance available for us to tap into. We have set out our plans and the elders in our village are taking the lead role in ensuring that plans set out for the development of our village is followed.” Mr Naikasau highlighted that youths in their village have been urged to plant as many pine trees as they can so they would be able to benefit from it in the future. “We have also sent out requests to Government

requesting a few assistances such as the installation of solar lights, Irish crossings including agriculture assistance. He went on to emphasise that various Government assistance available should be fully utilised by all villagers in Fiji as it was readily available for them. “We want to thank the Government for the many opportunities and for us here in Nawaqadamu we will support every initiative that come our way as long as it will benefit our people and our future.”

## Tourism numbers continue to grow

By MEREANI GONEDUA

FJI has recovered 71 percent of its 2019 visitor numbers with higher yields — paving the way for a full return to pre-pandemic levels by 2024. Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Viliame Gavoka highlighted this at the recently held 2023 Fiji Tourism Expo (FTE) in Nadi, adding that by value Fiji has recovered 73 percent of its tourism earnings. “If we look at the first quarter of this year, (January-March) we welcomed 175,284 visitors, a recovery of about 102 percent compared to the same quarter pre-pandemic. Hotels are reporting unprecedented bookings. So not only are we recovering, we are thriving. “Our national airline, Fiji Airways, is recording bookings with more seats and more passengers than in 2019 with strong forward bookings looking at the next 12 months.” “Since the last FTE, we have re-launched direct services to Adelaide, Hong Kong and Japan. Recently we also announced direct services commencing in July to Canberra.” Minister Gavoka highlighted that as the hub of the Pacific Fiji will continue to invest in connectivity between our islands, and with the rest of the world. “We know there is demand, and it is up to us as an industry and as Government to meet these demands,” he said. “Unlocking investments, diversifying our offering, and dispersing tourism and its benefits are key priorities of the Fiji Government.” The Minister stated that at the moment, they are working with the World Bank to strengthen targeted infrastructure and essential services in Vanua Levu that can unlock tourism developments that include domestic airports. “This is a 10-year partnership and at the end of which, I hope we get to have an FTE event in the north.” He also emphasised that everyone has a part to play in connecting people and making tourism what it is – and what it can be.







# Statesman broke glass ceiling: Prof Ratuva



Renowned Fiji-born academic, Professor Steven Ratuva of the University of Canterbury in New Zealand speaks at a public lecture on Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna at the University of the South Pacific held recently.

Photo: ILISAPECI TUIVALE

By PRASHILA DEVI

**R**ATU Sir Lala Sukuna had broken the glass ceiling that was there during the colonial days in terms of education.

Renowned Fiji-born academic, Professor Steven Ratuva of the University of Canterbury in New Zealand spoke at length

on the life of Fiji's first statesman during a public lecture on Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna at the University of the South Pacific recently.

"Ratu Sukuna was the most prominent sons of Fiji of his time in terms of education, in terms of transformational thinking- some of the institutional foundation that is set-up to build the modern Fiji even though it was during the colonial days and he died 12-13 years before independence."

Prof. Ratuva explained the instrumental role played by Ratu Sukuna in grooming Fiji's key leaders such as Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, Ratu George Cakobau, Ratu Edward Cakobau, and Ratu Penaia Ganilau.

He said essentially, he prepared them for independence.

"Ratu Sukuna cherished education, it was his first and foremost focus as a young boy, he was aiming always higher and higher and broke the glass ceiling which was set in those colonial days as none of the natives were educated in those days," he said.

He also highlighted that in the political framing Ratu Sukuna was perceived by critics as somebody whose symbolism, whose ideals might have inspired that nationalistic ideals which would have led to some of the issues in the past in

Fiji like 1987 or 2000 but these ideas are misconceived.

"This was not true when you look at the historical context within which he grew, he was exposed to diverse cultures at a very early age- he started his formal education at the Wairuku Indian School in Ra so that early connection with an Indian school through his schooling, the way he was able to assimilate himself in the multiracial context also reshaped his life in later years," Prof. Ratuva explained.



Audience at a public lecture on Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna at the University of the South Pacific held recently. Photo: ILISAPECI TUIVALE

## Greater understanding of Ratu Sukuna's life



Former Fiji diplomat and Institute of Indigenous Studies CEO, Emitai Boladuadua had an interactive discourse on the life of Fiji's Stateman, Ratu Sukuna during the public lecture at the FNU Nasinu Campus recently, which was also attended by the Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources, Filimoni Vosarogo. Photo: ILISAPECI TUIVALE

By ILISAPECI TUIVALE

**A** Chief's most prized possession is his people. This was the reflection of former Fiji diplomat and chief executive officer of the Institute of Indigenous Studies, Emitai Boladuadua, on the life and legacy of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna to students, staff and members of the public that attended the public lecture conducted by him at the FNU Nasinu Campus recently.

During the Ratu Sukuna Day

celebrations held in Fiji, the public lecture was also an opportunity for four distinguished speakers to respond to Mr Boladuadua's presentation, which allowed for a greater understanding of the vision Ratu Sukuna had for Fiji.

They were, the Principal of the Pacific Theological College, Rev. Prof. Upolu Luma Vaai, FNU Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dr Jimaima Lako, Ms. Sereima Balesomi an FNU lecturer and the Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources, Filimoni Vosarogo who concluded the responses.

Some facts about the Fijian statesman

that many students grasped from the lecture was that he died without any property to his name because his people were his most prized possession, and the *sulu-vakataga* (pocket sulu) was initiated by him.

Minister Vosarogo acknowledged the role of women in the development of leaders, and encouraged students to become leaders with vision and leaders who can lead like Ratu Sukuna.

## PM Rabuka remembers Ratu Sukuna as man of honour

By SHEENAL CHARAN

**F**IJI'S progress into one of the most economically-developed countries among the Pacific Islands is underpinned by what Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna put in place years ago.

This was the message shared by the Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka on the occasion of Ratu Sukuna Day.

While remembering Ratu Sukuna as a man of honour, PM Rabuka said Ratu Sukuna's inherent intelligence and abilities came with all the mana and authority of those born into the ranks of chiefly leadership, and that he was widely respected and revered and to some he was a virtual demigod.

PM Rabuka said Ratu Sukuna saw with clarity that the arrival and settlement of the Girmitya from India had transformed Fiji into a multi-ethnic, multicultural country.

He explained that Ratu Sukuna knew how important land was to the iTaukei but asserted that landowners were duty bound to utilise what they possessed for the benefit of all.

"He argued that should a landowner's holding be more than he could utilise, he should lease the surplus to those who could make use of it," Prime Minister Rabuka said.

"The high chief had to balance these realities with the Fijian right of ownership over land that, to them, was "absolute and indestructible."

"In the Legislative Council in October 1933, Ratu Sukuna highlighted that the Indian agricultural community was Fiji's greatest producer of sugar, central to the country's biggest and most stable industry and the Girmitya descendants had provided a "striking demonstration" of what individual effort in agriculture could achieve in the face of many obstacles."

He added that Ratu Sukuna believed that the Council of Chiefs and the "new Fijian liberal element" would favourably consider setting aside tracts of land for the settlement of those Indians dispossessed through the also legitimate desire of the landowners to take up economic cultivation.

"In a 1936 speech to the Council of Chiefs, Ratu Sukuna emphasised that the foremost consideration of any Fijian is land; it was also the basis of happiness," PM Rabuka highlighted.

PM Rabuka reiterated to the people of Fijia to walk together further along the road to reconciliation and peace and follow Ratu Sukuna's advice of sacrificing, if necessary, community interests for the benefit of the whole.



# We are on the cusp of a new dawn: President Katonivere



The President, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere is joined by Joint Commander of the French Armed Forces in the South-West Pacific - Brigadier General Valéry Putz, officers of the French Armed Forces and the French Ambassador to Fiji, Francois-Xavier Leger during the Ratu Sukuna celebrations at Albert Park. **Photo: NANISE NEIMILA**

By NANISE NEIMILA

**T**HOUSANDS of people attended the Ratu Sukuna celebration at Albert Park, which began with a march from the Flea Market to the park.

Students from Queen Victoria School, Ratu Kadavulevu School, Marist Brothers High School and Adi Cakobau School were part of the march as well.

Ratu Sukuna Day celebrations was the culmination of the weeklong commemoration of the life of the late soldier, scholar, chief, statesman and son of Fiji, Ratu Sir Josefa Vanayaliyali Lalabalavu Sukuna.

The President, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere, while delivering his message at the Ratu Sukuna Day celebrations highlighted that much has been shared and reflected regarding the life of service and leadership of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna.

“As a nation, a people, and a generation we are on the cusp of a new dawn as we celebrated Girit Day earlier in the month and the opening of the Great Council of Chiefs recently. With Ratu Sukuna Day celebrations, these three significant occasions being revived after more than a decade is an indication of the winds of change we are to embrace.”

“For the last seven days, we witnessed the re-birth of Ratu Sir Josefa Lalabalavu Vanayaliyali Sukuna’s legacy. We saw the passion of Fijians who remembered Ratu Sukuna and those who learned about him for the first time with three public lectures at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji National University, and the University of

Fiji.”

He further spoke about the Ratu Sukuna leadership conference, the leadership village at Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Memorial School, the display at the Fiji Museum, and the celebration in schools across our beloved country.

“As we reflect on the life of the late statesman, it is necessary that we ask ourselves what it is from the life of the statesman that we wish to learn from.”

“Last week at the opening of the Great Council of Chiefs I challenged my fellow chiefs that should we want a better Fiji and remain relevant in these times, it is only appropriate that the younger generations are groomed in iTaukei protocol, leadership and all mannerism befitting a servant leader.”

“Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna remains widely respected and admired as an outstanding leader and statesman of great vision. He was known as a man of two worlds one as a prominent Chief and another as a first among equals of the Fijian cadre in the British administration.”

Similar sentiments were shared by Joint Commander of the French Armed Forces in the South-West Pacific - Brigadier General Valéry Putz.

He shared Ratu Sukuna’s life, telling us that he fought with great gallantry, earning him a Médaille Militaire, the second highest French award, only given to non-commissioned officers who have distinguished themselves in exceptional ways.

The celebrations at Albert Park concluded with entertainment from the various cultural groups.



The President, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere visits the exhibition which was part of the Ratu Sukuna celebrations at Albert Park pavilion. **Photo: NANISE NEIMILA**

## Head Boy acknowledges the great Fijian statesman



Ratu Kadavulevu School Head Boy, Nikolaus Seduadua presented a poem on Ratu Sukuna

By AZARIA FAREEN

**R**ATU Sir Lala Sukuna was instrumental in the setting up of the Native Land Trust Board and his important role in preparing Fiji for post-independence.

This was highlighted by 18-year-old Head Boy of Ratu Kadavulevu School, Nikolaus Seduadua, as he presented a poem on Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna during an oratory contest at the school.

The celebrations during the Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna Day around the country provided an opportunity for the Head Boy to expand his knowledge of the great leader and scholar.

“Through this, I have come to learn more about the various contributions Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna made in steering Fiji towards independence with his vision and his other achievements,” Mr Seduadua said.

“I want to call on this generation to continue to reflect on the achievements of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna by writing poems, having discussions and presenting it on a platform.”

“I want to thank my language teacher who did the research for the poem at the National Archives of Fiji, and which was written in the iTaukei language highlighting Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna’s accomplishments,” he added.

Mr Seduadua said he received a lot of motivation from his teachers to elevate his oratory skills and he feels overwhelmed with the trust bestowed on him.

“As a Head Boy, my responsibilities include working with my fellow prefects in seeing that the students abide by the rules of the school and the discipline level of the school is maintained,” he highlighted.

“My advice to teenagers is to put God first, work towards your aspirations in order to create your own legacy,” he added.

Mr Seduadua presented the poem during the celebrations that was held at the Ratu Sukuna Memorial School in Nabua as part of the series of events organised by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs to bring about greater awareness, especially amongst the youth, on the life of Ratu Sukuna.



# Fiji is committed to advancing social justice



Fiji's President, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere with the Official Secretary in the Office of the President, Kiti Temo (left) and Fiji's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Organisations based Geneva, Luke Daunivalu on the margins of the the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference held in Geneva, Switzerland. **Photo: NANISE NEIMILA**

By NANISE NEIMILA

“Fiji is committed to advancing social justice, which is a fundamental value and goal for humanity, both at home and abroad.”

This was the message conveyed by the President, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere, while delivering his statement at the World of Work Summit during the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference, in Geneva recently.

“We have ratified all eight fundamental conventions of the ILO and implemented various policies and programs to protect and empower our workers, especially those in vulnerable sectors such as tourism, agriculture, and fisheries.”

President Katonivere highlighted that social justice meant fair treatment of all people in a society, including respect for the rights of minorities and equitable distribution of resources among members of a community or a nation.

In line with the Fiji Government's and Cabinet's decision to accede to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Fiji's Head of State highlighted that the Summit provided an opportunity to inform the international community that Fiji has taken the important step of supporting UNDRIP.

“We join the international community in

affirming the fullest expression of Indigenous peoples' aspirations. Fiji's support for UNDRIP is complementary to its commitment to ILO Convention 169, which Fiji ratified in 1998. As a nation, we will continue to ensure that the rights of indigenous people are safeguarded and protected.”

“As a regional hub in the Pacific, Fiji is facing complex migration challenges that have direct impact on our society and economy. According to the Migration Profile 2020, Fiji has experienced mass migration of its population due to political upheaval in the past and continues to have a significant rate of emigration, especially among skilled workers.”

President Katonivere stated that Fiji was a destination country for migrants from other Pacific islands and beyond, which contributed to the labour market and cultural diversity.

“These migration dynamics pose both opportunities and challenges for Fiji's social justice agenda. On one hand, migration can enhance human development, social mobility, and cultural exchange.”

President Katonivere urged the leaders present at the forum on the need to cooperate with regional and international partners, such as the ILO and other UN agencies, to share best practices, learn from each other's experiences, and coordinate responses.

“We must embrace the spirit of multilateralism and solidarity that underpins the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.”

## Fiji highlights labour challenges with ILO D-G



Fiji's President, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere met with the International Labour Organization's Director-General, Gilbert Houngbo in Geneva, Switzerland on the margins of the the 111th Session of the International Labour Conference. **Photo: NANISE NEIMILA**

By NANISE NEIMILA

Fiji's President, Ratu Wiliame Katonivere met with the International Labour Organization Director-General, Gilbert Houngbo in Geneva, Switzerland.

The two met on the margins of the 111th Session of the International Labour conference as President Katonivere was invited by the ILO Director-General to speak at the World of Work Summit with the theme “Social Justice for all”.

President Katonivere spoke on the need for an inclusive and harmonious labour environment, as well as the need for the tripartite system to be strengthened through coordination and communication.

The Head of State also highlighted the challenge of the migration of workers for overseas employment and the need for decent jobs and social justice.

President Katonivere also extended an invitation for Mr Houngbo to visit Fiji during his tenure.

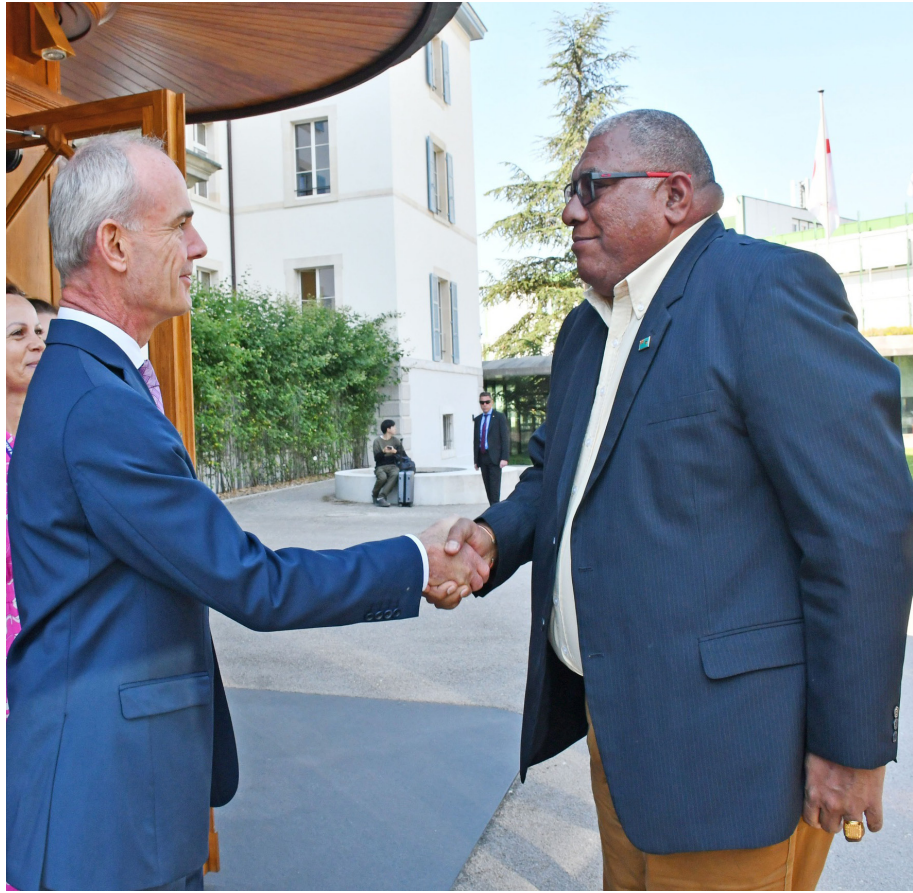
In response, D-G Houngbo expressed his appreciation to President Katonivere for the productive discussions, which build on opportunities for greater cooperation in improving social justice within the labour environment.

He emphasised that the Pacific was important to the ILO and there was greater need to define systematic areas of focus to improve social justice in the labour environment.

D-G Houngbo further highlighted that he was aware of the issue of migrant workers and he was in discussion with Pacific leaders.

He further added that there needs to be continuous consultation and mutual understanding to look after the welfare of the people.

## President Katonivere meets with ICRC Vice-President



Fiji's President Ratu Wiliame Katonivere met with Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Gilles Carbonnier in Geneva, Switzerland recently. **Photo: NANISE NEIMILA**

Fiji's President Ratu Wiliame Katonivere met with Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Gilles Carbonnier recently.

President Katonivere thanked ICRC for its remarkable support to Fiji and the region through humanitarian initiatives that contribute towards national development.

The Head of Stated said he looks forward to potential cooperation opportunities with the ICRC in the areas of disaster preparedness and climate resilience.

Mr Carbonnier, in welcoming

President Katonivere to the ICRC office in Geneva, briefed President on the roles of ICRC, one of which was being independent, neutral organisation ensuring humanitarian protection and assistance for victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence.

The secretariat supports local Red Cross and Red Crescent action in more than 191 countries, bringing together more than 16 million volunteers for the good of humanity.

President Katonivere had the opportunity to tour the ICRC state of the art museum.



# Healthy habits must start early

By SHEENAL CHARAN

**H**EALTHY eating should be taught at home as early as possible to give children a better chance to develop long-lasting healthy lifestyle habits.

This was highlighted by the First Lady, Filomena Katonivere while launching a locally designed children’s activity book – “We love our veggies” at the Alliance Française in Suva recently.

“As a wife, a mother and grandmother, I totally agree that it is important to educate the taste of young children to the flavours of natural, whole foods from a young age as they will continue to appreciate these flavours and will enjoy eating healthy foods later in life,” First Lady Filomena said.

“There is also a misconception that to eat healthy we need to buy imported food but this is not true. We are lucky in Fiji to have such an abundance of tasty, nutritious and healthy produce available all year round.”

“I hope that once children learn about health and nutrition, they will share their knowledge with their siblings, parents and grandparents too, starting a virtuous circle in the family.”

She added that Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and NCD related deaths statistics in Fiji are alarming.

First Lady Filomena acknowledged illustrators, Vittoria Pasca and Courtney Underwood-Dass for using their expertise

as instruments of change to address the endemic NCDs that has been affecting the young population, targeting the most vulnerable of society - the children.

As a preschool teacher by profession, Mrs Underwood-Dass often noticed students bringing unhealthy meals to school and felt the need to make learning materials based on healthy eating for children.

“The school that I taught at was very strict with the type of lunches that the kids had to bring to school, in the beginning when we had new students, they didn’t know the rules, they used to bring a lot of unhealthy greasy food,” she said.

“When putting together a health-conscious activity book, my main aim was to make something fun and engaging, so while teaching kids, maybe some adults will also learn the variety of wonderful fruits and vegetables available around us in Fiji.”

Mrs Underwood-Dass said eating healthy can be a challenge these days because of the readily available fast foods and processed products available in shops but



First Lady Filomena Katonivere with the illustrator of “We love our veggies” children’s activity book Courtney Underwood-Dass and kids during the launch of the book at Alliance Francaise in Suva.

she hopes the book would teach kids that eating healthy can be fun and worth the effort.

The book consists of playful and creative activities designed to teach not only the children but also the whole family, about growing vegetables, healthy eating and nutritious cooking with local ingredients.

The second part of the book focuses more on nutrition and healthy cooking; it contains some healthy and delicious recipes made from local ingredients, which show that healthy eating can be very tasty and satisfying.

The book can be purchased online from the My Fiji Store.

# Taveuni Cooperative hails Government contribution

By AZARIA FAREEN

**A** 150-member group from diverse backgrounds came together in 1991 to form Taveuni Multiracial Land Purchase Co-operative Limited, which has been highly commended for their foresight and solidarity in teamwork.

In lauding the achievements of the group, Minister for Trade, Cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications, Manoa Kamikamica highlighted that hiring of two diggers, a tractor, a truck and a single cab vehicle have been the means of revenue stream for the members.

“The cooperative in completing its objective of subdividing and allocating land to its members as a land purchase cooperative have now ventured into utilising the renovated warehouse facility and solar drier for hire,” Minister Kamikamica said.

The co-operative was able to complete a solar drier project by contributing its one-third share valued at \$18,907.65 and getting Government assistance to the tune of \$37,815.30 through the Integrated Human Resource Development Programme.

He said that “the refurbished hot solar drier will boost the placement of the cooperative’s product in the international market and the assistance ensures that the products run through standardised

processes and market standard”.

“We have confidence and respect for your hard work in this cooperative and the people on the Garden Isle of Taveuni and the Province of Cakaudrove,” Minister Kamikamica added.

The elated chairman of the cooperative, Adrial Sami, in thanking the Government for the assistance, said that he considers himself lucky to be part of such an initiative which can provide relief to the people of Taveuni.

“People doing yagona farming, copra farming and selling dried fruits can take advantage of this facility at a reasonable cost,” Mr Sami said.

“All the items used in the facility are from India and an engineer also came to assemble the solar drier and set it up within a week. We are currently running the solar drier as a trial to see how long it takes each item to be fully dried.”

“We are planning to get a pounding machine where people can get their kava



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Co-operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications, Manoa Kamikamica with members of the Taveuni Multiracial Land Purchase Co-operative Limited during the opening of the solar drier facility in Nayala, Taveuni.

pounded and later start importing the produce of the members,” he added.

Mr Sami said that they have 50 blocks of commercial land left which they want to lease out and also make a building which will be rented out so that the cooperative continues to grow.

“We have reserved an area near the seaside with plans to build a marina which should provide access to yachts and boats. Once that happens then we can also set up a coffee shop and other income generating business,” he added.





Acting Chief Justice and acting President of Fiji, Justice Salesi Temo hands over Developing SMEs in Manufacturing award to Rede's Fashion owner, Renuka Devi at the FDB National Small and Medium Enterprise Awards 2022 held recently. **Photo: ILISAPECI TUIVALE**

# Entrepreneurs recognised for perseverance

By ILISAPECI TUIVALE

RECOGNISED as the backbone of Fiji's economy, Small and Medium Enterprise entrepreneurs were recently acknowledged for their tireless efforts and hard work at the FDB National Small and Medium Enterprise Awards 2022.

The acting Chief Justice and acting President of Fiji, Justice Salesi Temo officiated at the event held in Suva where he commended SME entrepreneurs for the vital role that they play in providing employment, stimulating innovation, and contributing to the overall economic growth of the nation.

"While SMEs remain such a crucial

aspect of every economy, it remains difficult for them to gain the recognition and support they require and deserve – and I believe this is where awards event like tonight's make a significant difference," Justice Temo said.

"To SME operators, congratulations for continuing to create job opportunities, it was pleasing to witness how you adapted to the constantly changing global trends by offering flexible work arrangements– to meet both the needs of the customer as well as that of your employees'.

"Your resilience and perseverance have not gone unnoticed. The ongoing challenges and the disruptions to your supply chains and customer base did not deter you from continuing operations and

remaining committed to your employees and customers," A/Chief Justice Temo said.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises and Communications Manoa Kamikamica and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Biman Prasad were also present at the awards night.

Ten SME entrepreneurs were awarded with certificates, plaques and \$5000 for each award.

- SME of the Year – Health Masters Pte Ltd
- Youth Entrepreneur of the Year – Health Masters Pte Ltd
- Developing SMEs in Agriculture – Shahil's Party Ice & Frozen Supplies
- Developing SMEs in Manufacturing –

- Rede's Fashion
- Developing SMEs in Professional and Business Services – Kuar Singh & Company Pte Ltd
- Developing SMEs in Tourism – Hot Glass Fiji (Pte) Ltd
- Developing SMEs in Wholesale and Retail – New South Music
- Risk Conscious SME of the Year – Fire Track
- Climate and Eco-Friendly SME of the Year – Oil Care Solutions
- Woman Entrepreneur of the Year – AKD Accountants & Business Consultants
- Rookie Entrepreneur of the Year – Sweet Sip