

FIJI FOCUS



FIJI CHAIRS WORLD BANK'S SMALL STATES ROUNDTABLE

3

8000

FIJIANS 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

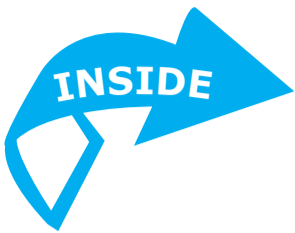
FIJI will need close to \$9.4 billion over the next 10 years to be able to build resilience in its infrastructure. Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, speaking at the

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,

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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.

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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 bring-

ing 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 landlocked 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.



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

PM commended for global climate dialogue

AZARIA FAREEN

FIJI 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.”

\$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.

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”



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

School's smart city concept tops award

EMI KOROITANOVA

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.

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 VULAI DAUSIGA

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 Koroiavesau 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 Koroiavesau and members of the vanua ko Nakovacake with their new boat at Navoci Village, Nadi. Photo: LITIA VULAI DAUSIGA

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-

ssues," Ms Dawai noted.

Minister Koroiavesau 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.



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

FIJI FOCUS



FIJI CHAIRS WORLD BANK'S SMALL STATES ROUNDTABLE

3

8000

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