

# Fiji independence day

## Change, peace and prosperity through education

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE REPUBLIC  
OF THE FIJI ISLANDS

The Republic of the Fiji Islands is celebrating today the 39th anniversary of its independence with confidence for a brighter future. Thirty-nine years ago on Oct. 10, 1970, the government and people of Fiji were given instruments to enter the arena of free nations and pursue their destiny as a sovereign nation.



It is a great pleasure and honor on this memorable occasion to extend on behalf of the government and people of Fiji, warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and members of the Imperial household, as well as to the government and people of this great nation Japan. I would also like to extend warm greetings and "bula vinaka" to all Fiji nationals in Japan, and to applaud them for their continued support to the embassy and for the various roles that

they play in promoting Fiji. **Fiji's diversity**

This year's Fiji Day independence celebration is based on the theme "Moving Fiji Toward Change, Peace and Prosperity Through Education." The theme encompasses the spirit of Fiji's Strategic Framework for Change, a sociopolitical road map designed to ensure a sustainable democratic system for our country to truly accommodate the various distinctly unique races and cultures of our cosmopolitan country, and is guided by the visions and pillars of the Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress.

This theme reflects our genuine intention to create a blueprint for our future generations that despite the disparities and differences in opinions and cultures of the people of Fiji, true peace and prosperity can be attained through unison on a collective front. The theme, therefore, recognizes that we are at the crossroads of our journey in

nationhood, appreciating our diversity and moving together in harmony.

### Political relations

Fiji is thankful to the government and people of Japan for their unwavering support amid the political changes that Fiji is facing. It is during such times that Fiji needs the cooperation and support of nations ready to extend their assistance. Japan and the Republic of the Fiji Islands have enjoyed friendly and cooperative relations since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1970. Such relations have been developed through people exchange and Japan's economic cooperation to Fiji under its bilateral assistance

programs.

We are also thankful to the Japan-Fiji Parliamentary League, which has been and remains a vital avenue for dialogue and networking between the two countries. Fiji looks forward to stronger ties and consolidation of bilateral relations between our countries in the future.

### Trade, tourism

Fiji continues to enjoy trading ties with Japan, with strong trade balance performances recorded for certain months this year. Fiji imports from Japan vehicles, vehicle accessories, machinery and electronic items. Fiji's major export components include wood chips, marine products and beverages. The export of

precious stones, in particular Fiji cultured pearls, has also contributed to Fiji's trade balance as niche markets in Japan for the pearls are steadily growing.

The global economic slowdown has been a challenge to our economy as it has to other economies around the world. Despite these recent setbacks, Fiji continues to maintain bilateral and multilateral trade relations with Japan. For this we are thankful to our trading partners, agencies and companies in Japan for actively engaging with Fiji. We are also thankful for the significant roles played by the Pacific Island Center (PIC) and JETRO, and for their resilience in facilitating the promotion of Fiji products in the Japanese market. Through the assistance of the PIC, major Fiji companies have been able to effectively market their products in Japan through sponsored trade shows.

The tourism industry remains one of Fiji's top foreign exchange earners, and has also become one of the largest sources of economic growth in comparison with other industries such as sugar, garments and other sectors. Fiji has long been a popular vacation spot that attracts visitors from around the world and is a favorite honeymoon destination. The recent establishment of upmarket resorts affiliated

with renowned international hotel chains will enhance the industry's capacity to accommodate existing demands and provide employment for our people.

Approximately 23,000 Japanese visitors travel to Fiji annually. This number is gradually increasing as a result of concentrated marketing by the Tourism Fiji Japan Office. The introduction of new air routes connecting several Japanese cities with Fiji through Air Calin and Continental Airlines will add to visitor arrivals. Fiji is renowned for its friendliness and hospitality, and these qualities bring visitors back to Fiji.

### Japanese aid to Fiji

Japan remains one of Fiji's major donors in the economic and social sectors. Japan has provided funds for capital works, technical experts and volunteers, and has also facilitated long- and short-term training for several Fiji nationals in Japan. Japan announced at the Pacific Leaders Meeting (PALM 5) in Hokkaido this May the extension of ¥50 billion in aid to Pacific island nations for the next three years to assist in countering climate change and other challenges confronting them. The assistance extended will strengthen Japan's partnership with Pacific island countries.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) con-

tinues to provide valuable assistance through technical training and human resources development for Fiji nationals through its Overseas Volunteer Cooperation programs. The Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA) continues to operate the National Youth Training Center in Sigatoka. Fiji is grateful for the assistance provided by OISCA International through its capacity development and environmental programs over the years, empowering our young people with basic skills in agriculture, management of community development projects and environment conservation activities.

A number of Fiji nationals are pursuing degrees in various disciplines at some of Japan's renowned universities under Japan-funded scholarships. A small community of Fiji nationals resides and works here, making Japan their home. Some of our top rugby players are playing for teams in the Japan Rugby Top League competition.

### Reasons for celebration

In conclusion, we as a nation have a lot to be thankful for. Our nation is a beautiful island of tranquillity in the midst of worldwide upheavals. Fiji is blessed with peace and prosperity. We have a compassionate and resilient people of many races who have learned to live together

over the years despite their differences. This is evident in our collective effort to help each other overcome upheavals caused by nature and man.

We have continued to support international peacekeeping missions in the world's trouble spots and in countries emerging out of conflict situations under the United Nations banner. Our men and women who have served in U.N. missions have been recognized for their bravery.

As we celebrate today, we as a nation have every reason to be grateful to Almighty God for his mercies, which have enabled us as a nation to be where we are today, a nation poised for greater things.

May I take this wonderful opportunity to extend our appreciation to all our corporate sponsors, the Japan-Fiji Friendship Society, the Japan-Fiji Parliamentary League, Nihon Fiji Kai, and members of the Fiji community and friends for their support, and genuine commitment to the promotion of good will between Japan and Fiji.

Finally, my sincere gratitude goes to The Japan Times whose generous support we have always received over the years and for allowing us this tremendous opportunity to celebrate Fiji's 39th anniversary of independence with its readers. It is our hope that Japan will continue to assist Fiji make the theme of the Fiji Day 2009 celebration "Moving Fiji Toward Change, Peace and Prosperity Through Education" a reality.

Thank you very much.

## Working together for progress, happiness

It is with great pleasure that we take this opportunity to express our most sincere congratulations today to the people of the Republic of the Fiji Islands as they celebrate the 39th anniversary of their independence.

The world at large has reached a turning point. Things we formerly took for granted, even with respect to our global economy, social structures and global environment, have changed beyond recognition.

Pacific Rim island nations such as the Republic of the Fiji Islands are blessed with a beautiful and abundant natural environment, and they have long enjoyed the prosperity this environment affords. The global warming we are witnessing today has brought with it not only nature's blessings, however, but also severe natural calamities. Fiji suffered from heavy flooding earlier this year, and the Pan-Pacific region has experienced growing numbers of major earthquakes and tsunami.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama made a pledge Sept. 24 at the United Nations Summit on Climate Change to slash greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent from their 1990 levels by 2020. He also announced Japan's readiness to boost its financial and technical assis-

tance to developing countries as they tackle the challenges facing them in this area.

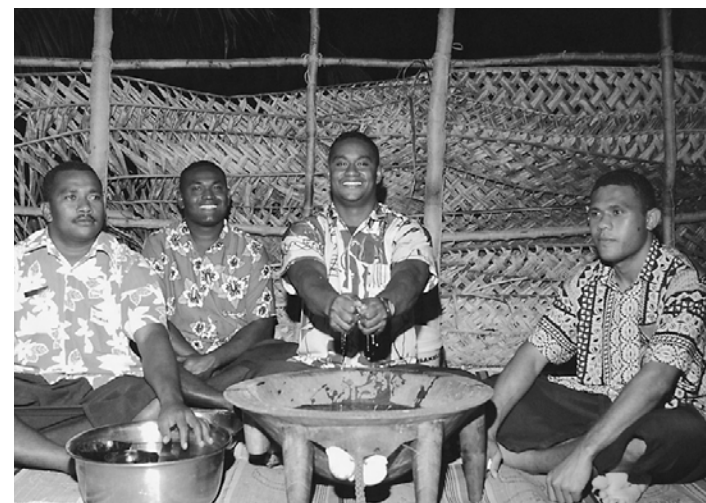
This ambitious plan to curb emissions will not be easy to achieve. It will require the cooperation of countries throughout the world, and it will be especially incumbent on Pacific Rim nations, which can expect to suffer the effects of global warming with particular severity, to work together to protect the global environment in order to assure their prosperity and preserve the happiness of their people.

We have been pleased to see an increasingly close relationship develop between the Republic of Fiji and Japan in recent years.

In the economic sphere, Fiji is gaining recognition among Japanese today for its beautiful pearls, in addition to its renowned tourism and fisheries industries. It is also earning a reputation among young people and senior citizens as a highly attractive venue for pursuing English-language studies.

As the future unfolds, the Japan-Fiji Friendship Society will continue to serve as a bridge between our two countries, and to contribute to the continuing progress and growing prosperity of the Republic of the Fiji Islands.

(The Japan-Fiji Friendship Society)



Cultural tradition: The preparation of kav a, or yapona, for Fijian ceremonies is very elaborate. EMBASSY OF FIJI

Congratulations  
In Celebration of  
the 39th National Anniversary  
of The Republic of Fiji



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to the People of  
the Republic of Fiji on  
the 39th Anniversary of  
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