

Fiji independence day

Celebrating Fiji: one nation, one destiny

Isikeli Mataitoga
AMBASSADOR OF FIJI

It is with great pleasure and honor on this memorable occasion to extend on behalf of the president of the Republic of Fiji, the government and people of Fiji, warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and the members of the Imperial Household, as well as to the government and people of this great nation, Japan. I extend warm greetings and "bula vinaka" to all Fiji nationals and friends of Fiji in Japan.



I convey once again the condolences of the people and the government of Fiji to the government of Japan for the sad loss of lives during the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake. Fiji is confident that Japan's renowned solidarity and history of recovery during such calamities will enhance recovery efforts in areas affected by the earthquake and the ensuing tsunami. We pray for comfort and peace for those that have lost loved ones and a speedy recovery of the economies in the prefectures affected.

Fiji offers students help

Following the devastating earthquake and tsunami in the Tohoku region, Prime Minister of Fiji Commodore Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama offered Fiji's assistance to the government of Japan. This was followed by the prime minister's approval that the government offer 20 places to university and high school students affected by this earth-

quake. Under the assistance program, students will relocate to Fiji for up to one year and will be admitted to the Fiji National University and selected government-managed secondary schools in Fiji.

This assistance program is an expression of our solidarity and support to the people of Japan generally and in particular those directly affected by the earthquake and tsunami in the Tohoku region. Fiji's stance in making this offer is consistent with the same selfless spirit and fraternal relationship, with which our forefathers sent soldiers to assist in the Malaysian emergency, peacekeeping in the Middle East and elsewhere, the Bougainville crisis, etc. It characterizes our desire to extend selfless love and sacrifice at great personal costs.

Japanese aid, assistance

Japan remains as one of Fiji's major donors in the economic and social sectors. Japan's official development assistance (ODA) program extended through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) continues to provide valuable assistance through technical training, human resources and project development in various sectors in Fiji. Close to 50 JICA experts and volunteers are currently working in Fiji in various areas.

The ODA policy to Fiji is basically in line with Japan's General Assistance Plan for the Pacific Region. While there are three vital components of the ODA program, i.e. grant aid, technical cooperation and loan aid, current principal components that are practicable for Fiji are technical cooperation and grant aid for basic human needs.



Ocean life: Fiji is a paradise for marine sports such as sailing, fishing, swimming, snorkeling and scuba diving. EMBASSY OF FIJI

Bilateral relationship

Japan's agreement in October 2010 for Fiji and Japan to develop a bilateral framework, in the form of a memorandum of understanding setting out some guidelines for deepening trade and investment in specific sectors of the Fiji economy, will further deepen and enhance Japan-Fiji trade and investment relations. This is indicative as well of Japan's resolve to maintain bilateral relations with Fiji and remains strong evidence of its commitment to consider Fiji as a dialogue and equal sovereign state.

Fiji continues to enjoy trading ties with Japan with an annual bilateral trade of ¥8 billion. We have recorded significant surpluses in our balance of trade with Japan for several months leading to October 2011.

Fiji's economic reforms

The economic reforms undertaken by Fiji under the Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development

have produced positive mid-term results. Fiji's economic standing was recently assessed at a higher level by the credit-

rating agency Standard & Poor's. The various key reforms now under way, including reforms on land management being the

basic resource for Fiji's economic growth, when successfully completed will be the catalysts for promising economic growth in Fiji.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been successfully integrated under Fiji's Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development to ensure successful implementation and achievement of MDG targets. Described as the "greatest collective antipoverty project in human history," Fiji will continue to encourage and mobilize its citizens and communities to take ownership of MDGs.

Reasons for celebration

Our people have a lot to be thankful for during the last 41 years of our journey. Our nation is a beautiful island of tranquility in the midst of worldwide upheavals. We have a compassionate and resilient people of many races who have learned to live together over the years de-

spite their differences.

Fiji continues to support international peacekeeping missions in trouble spots around the globe under the U.N. banner. Our servicemen and servicewomen who have served in U.N. missions have been mentioned well for their bravery and commitment to the common good of humanity, and we pay tribute to those that have made the ultimate sacrifice.

As we celebrate today, we as a nation have every reason to be grateful to Almighty God for his tender mercies that have enabled us to come thus far, a nation poised for greater things.

May I extend our sincere appreciation to all our corporate sponsors, the Japan-Fiji Friendship Society, friends of Fiji in Japan and members of the Fiji community for their support and genuine commitment to the promotion of good will between Japan and Fiji.

Finally, my sincere gratitude 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 41st anniversary of independence with its readers.

May God bless Fiji-Japan relations.

Congratulations
to the People of the Republic of Fiji
on the 41st Anniversary of Their Independence Day



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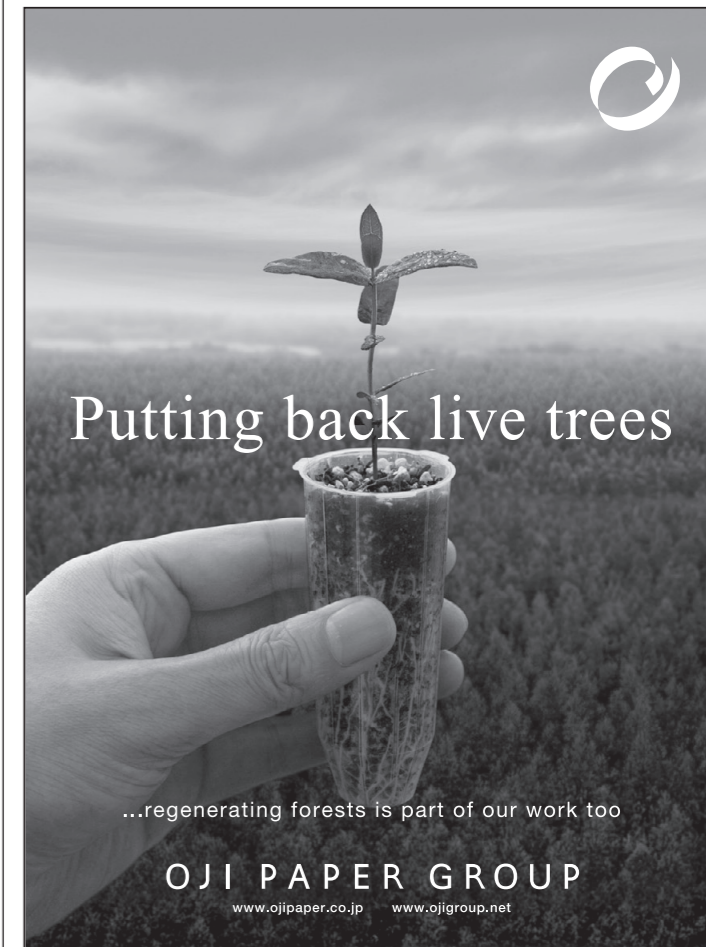
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