

# Fiji independence day

## One hope, one destiny, one nation: We are one

Isikeli Ulunairai Mataitoga  
AMBASSADOR OF FIJI

On the occasion of the 42nd National Day celebration it gives me great pleasure and honor on behalf of the president of the Republic of Fiji, the government and people of Fiji, to extend warm and sincere greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and the members of the Imperial household, as well as to the government of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and to the people of this great nation, Japan. I also extend warm greetings and "bula vinaka" to all Fiji nationals and friends of Fiji in Japan.



### A united Fiji for all

Since our last National Day celebration in 2011, there have been many positive developments taking place in Fiji, as the Bainimarama government continues with the rebuilding of Fiji to be a modern nation among its peers in the international community, where every citizen irrespective of race, religious belief, social or economic status, will feel and is treated equally. In January 2012, the government lifted the Public Emergency Decrees to facilitate the first important step in the preparation for setting up the Constitution Commission, mandated to undertake inclusive, fair and full participatory public dialogue with all the people of Fiji, on what they would like to see in the new constitution. In March, we welcome the United Nations election monitoring group to

Fiji to conduct its assessment of what is needed to ensure that the planned general election in 2014 will be free and fair. The assessment of this U.N. team is now being mainstreamed into the preparatory work of Fiji's Elections Office program.

The government also engaged, after international public tendering, a Canadian company to provide electronic voter registration machines and to also implement the initial phase of the first electronic voter registration system set for the 2014 election. This was followed with the launch of phase one of the electronic voter registration period, which commenced on April 1 and completed on July 31, 2012. At the end of the initial period of voter registration approximately 500,000 voters were registered. Fiji citizens living overseas will register through the various Fiji Diplomatic Missions and Consulate Offices from January 2013.

In March 2012, the Bainimarama government announced the setting up of the Constitution Commission (CC) with the appointment of renowned international scholar professor Yash Ghai as chairperson and its independent members. The persons being appointed as chair and members of the CC have received positive comments from the international community. There is wide acceptance that they are individuals with personal integrity and will execute their duties and responsibilities independently. Following their appointment, the CC began its nationwide public consultations. This process will be completed Oct. 10. The CC will then prepare a draft constitution based on their

public consultations. It is expected that a draft constitution will be available by mid-December 2012.

The final draft prepared by the CC will be submitted to His Excellency the president by January 2013. A Constituent Assembly, whose membership will be drawn from all facets of communities in Fiji, will be appointed by the president to deliberate on the draft constitution, and this process will take six to eight weeks. The outcome of the work of the Constituent Assembly will be submitted to a tribunal for verification that the core principles of the constitution, stipulated by government are captured appropriately in the constitution. Once the tribunal certifies the draft constitution as ready for adoption, it will be submitted to His Excellency for promulgation. Election shall be prepared and effected as stipulated in the constitution.

### Bilateral relationship

The Fiji-Japan bilateral relation is presently facing new challenges. These are being addressed diligently by officials from both governments. It is expected that in the remaining months of 2012 and early into 2013, senior official exchanges will take place to assist further in the process of rebuilding our relation. In this regard, I acknowledge the good work undertaken by the Japanese Ambassador in Fiji H.E. Eiichi Oshima in reaching out to the senior political and heads of governments departments in Fiji.

Fiji had reached an agreement in October 2010 with Japan to develop a bilateral framework, in the form of a memorandum of understanding with set guidelines for deepening trade and investment in specific sectors of the Fiji economy. We hope the relevant bilateral framework is a positive step for the rebuilding of our bilateral ties. This is indicative of Japan's resolve to maintain bilateral relations with Fiji, which attests to strong evidence of its commitment to consider Fiji as a dialogue partner and equal sovereign state.

Fiji continues to enjoy trade 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.

### Economic reforms

The economic reforms undertaken by Fiji under the Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socioeconomic 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 are now under way, including reform on land management being the basic resource for Fiji's economic growth, which when successfully completed will be the catalyst for promising economic growth in Fiji.

With openings for direct foreign investment by the Bainimarama government into extractive industries, Fiji's economy in the next two to five years is expected to strengthen significantly from 2.7 percent gross domestic prod-



Democracy: Lautoka residents attend an electronic voter registration session. EMBASSY OF FIJI

uct (GDP) growth for 2012 to 3.4 percent (projected) in 2013/2014 and to grow further to 5 percent by 2018/19.

### Reasons for celebration

Our people have a lot to be thankful for during the last 42 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 despite their differences. We are building towards a "United Fiji" — where everyone will be cared for and social justice a fundamental of our national development.

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 the 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



Future generations: Children gather at the early childhood celebrations held in Sigatoka on Sept. 22. EMBASSY OF 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 42nd anniversary of independence with its readers.

May God bless Fiji-Japan relations.



Strengthening ties: Hideo Kiji (center), with his wife, Tomoko, is commissioned as Fiji's honorary consul in Yokohama at a ceremony with Fiji Ambassador Isikeli Ulunairai Mataitoga on March 15. EMBASSY OF FIJI



Cooperation: Permanent Secretary for the Public Service Parmesh Chand (center) attends a farewell ceremony with Japan International Cooperation Agency volunteers at the PSC staff lounge in Berkeley Crescent. EMBASSY OF FIJI

Congratulations  
to the People of the Republic of Fiji  
on the 42nd Anniversary of Their Independence



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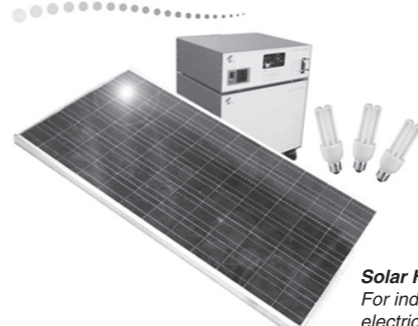
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of the Republic of Fiji

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