

Fiji National Day

Harmony in economic, social development brings benefit to all

Isikeli Uluinairai Mataitoga
AMBASSADOR OF FIJI

It is with great pleasure and honor on this memorable occasion that I extend, on behalf of His Excellency the President of the Republic of Fiji Epeli Nailatikau, the government and people of Fiji, warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of the Imperial household, as well as to the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the people of Japan. I also extend warm greetings and bula vinala to all Fijians and friends of Fiji in Japan.



Following Fiji's general elections on Sept. 17, 2014, Fiji-Japan bilateral relations have soared to new heights. High-level political exchanges began with the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Inoke Kubuabola, in March. In May, Fijian Prime Minister Josaia V. Bainimarama, visited Japan to meet Abe and also attend the Seventh Japan-Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM 7) in Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture. In Sept., Jiko Luveni, speaker of the Fijian parliament, visited Japan as part of a study tour. All of these high-level visits were at the invitation of the Japanese government and all took place within a six-month span, an indication of the renewed and greatly improving bilateral relations between Fiji and Japan.

This development is not lost on the private sector, which is also showing greater interest in investing and looking to Fiji for sources of new investment and businesses. At the same time, the Fijian Embassy in Japan is working to engage with metropolitan and rural Japan to promote Fiji as a desirable tourist destination for Japanese traveling overseas.

Bilateral relations

The government and people of Fiji are grateful for the warm

and cordial relations that have existed between our two countries since we established diplomatic relations 45 years ago. Japan has assisted Fiji and its people in so many ways, through overseas development assistance (ODA) and private organizations undertaking projects in Fiji, directly benefiting the Fijian people. This assistance is greatly appreciated by the government and people of Fiji.

Aid and assistance

Japan is one of Fiji's important development partners in the economic and social sectors. Japan's ODA program extended through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) continues to provide valuable assistance in terms of human resource development. At the grass-roots level, this entails social and economic welfare security programs focusing on environment-related projects and education plans in Fiji. About 2,500 participants from Fiji have taken JICA training programs in Japan, while around 720 JICA experts and 710 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers have worked and continue to work in Fiji in various fields of technical cooperation.

Furthermore, 16 students

from Fiji are currently pursuing studies in graduate schools and specialized training colleges throughout Japan, under the Japanese Government Scholarship Program.

Fiji has also been fortunate to receive generous assistance from Japan in times of natural disasters.

Economic cooperation

As is the case with Japan, trade and economic development is a priority for the Fijian government, and cooperation with Japan is a key element to advancing our future sustainable development. In this regard, consultations are currently taking place for the development of a bilateral framework setting out guidelines for deepening trade and investment in specific sectors of the Fijian economy. This will further deepen Japan-Fiji trade and investment relations. We also acknowledge with gratitude Japan's resolve to deepen bilateral relations with Fiji, as evident in a recent commitment to explore new ways to increase trade and economic cooperation between our two countries.

We expect trade and investment to grow further in the years ahead. The various economic and land reforms Fiji

has undertaken have started to yield remarkable results in recent years, attracting and registering significant growth in foreign direct investment. Fiji continues to welcome new Japanese businesses and investors to be part of this growth and reward.

The renewed and deepening political relations resulting from the Tokyo summit meeting between Bainimarama and Abe in May, is directly lifting the energy level of Japanese business and investment interest in Fiji. We expect these interests to further intensify when Japan undertakes development projects in Fiji, directly involving Japanese businesses, technology and knowledge sharing.

Fiji-Japan bilateral relations are poised to forge into new areas of cooperation that is in the mutual interest of both countries. These areas may include climate change, mitigation and adaptation, U.N. peacekeeping operations and ocean and sea policy development in Fiji and the South Pacific. Other areas include support for good governance and democratization of public institutions and human rights, including the promotion of social and economic rights, among others. These are new

challenges that both Fiji and Japan face, and should provide the basis of new cooperation and partnership.

Responsible global citizen

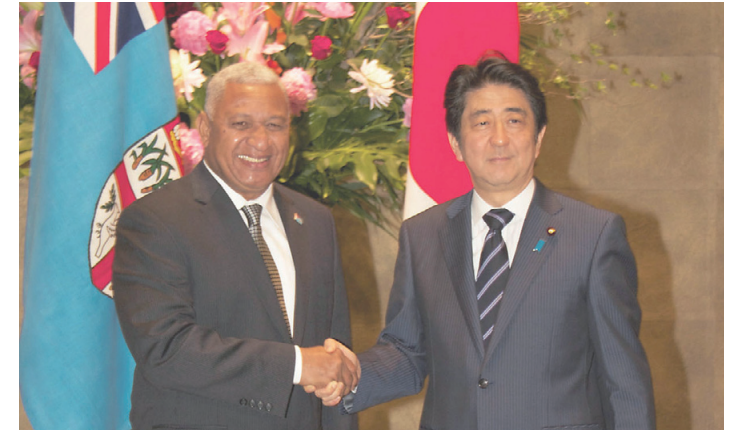
Our nation is a beautiful island of tranquillity in the midst of worldwide upheavals. We have a compassionate and resilient people of many races who have learned to live together over the years despite their differences.

Fiji's commitment to being a good global citizen is manifested through its ongoing engagement with the U.N. and the leading roles it plays in advocating the voice of the smaller island states and the least-developed nations of the world in various global forums. This was significantly attested to by its decision to take on the mantle of chairing the Group of 77 and China for the year 2013, thus, advocating that Fiji embraces its rights as an equal

member of the U.N., guided by its foreign policies and the shared values of respect for each other's sovereignty, equality, fairness and openness.

Fiji supports world peace and the peaceful resolution of all disputes between nations. To this end, we support international peacekeeping missions around the globe under the U.N. banner, as currently seen in our commitment to UNDOF in the Golan Heights. Our servicemen and servicewomen have served with distinction in U.N. peacekeeping missions and some have paid the ultimate price for their services. On this day of memoriam, I pay special tribute to them for their selfless sacrifice in pursuit of world peace.

In the midst of our celebration as a nation, we acknowledge and give thanks to the Almighty God for his tender mercies, which have enabled



Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji Josaia V. Bainimarama meets Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on May 19 in Tokyo during his visit to Japan. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI

us to come this far, a nation poised for greater things.

May I extend our sincere appreciation to all our corporate sponsors, Fiji's Honorary Consular Corps in Japan, the Japan-Fiji Parliamentary Friendship League, friends of Fiji in Japan and members of the Fijian community for their support and genuine commitment to the promotion of

goodwill 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 45th Anniversary of Independence with its readers.

May God bless Fiji-Japan relations.

Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Fiji on the 45th Anniversary of Their Independence

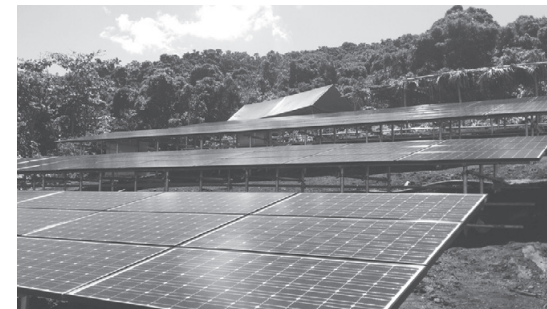


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