

# FIJI EMBASSY TOKYO NEWSLETTER

## Ambassador's Message

*Ni sa bula vinaka. Konnichiwa.*

Welcome to the second edition of our e-newsletter. In this edition, we share with you the work of the Fiji Embassy Tokyo, and Fiji-Japan relations amid the COVID-19 pandemic from January – March 2021.

Despite the continuous state of emergency declared in Tokyo and other urban prefectures, the Embassy renews its Outreach Programme with close local government ties via virtual means.

The Embassy has been working closely with our Fiji nationals throughout Japan. You can read about the amazing contributions by some of our nationals working and living in Japan on "Questions with our Fiji nationals". It's a great way of staying connected and sharing one's experience to help build others.

I hope that you find this edition interesting. I also urge our fellow Fijians and friends to follow official health advisories and ensure your businesses and families are safe.

*Vinaka vakalevu, Arigato gozaimasu.*

**H.E. Mr. Isikeli U. Mataitoga**  
**Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary**



## Inside This Edition

Ambassador's Message	1
Key Highlights	2
Questions with our Fiji nationals	3
Exchange Programs	5
Fiji-Japan Stories	6
Fijian Made Product Profile	7

## Key Highlights

### Virtual Consultation with Fiji Honorary Consuls in Japan

A virtual consultation between Ambassador Isikeli Maitaitoga and Fiji Honorary Consuls based in Japan, organised by the Fiji Embassy Tokyo, took place on 28 January 2021.

Ambassador Maitaitoga expressed his gratitude to the honorary consuls, namely HC Mr. Hideo Kiji (based in Yokohama, Kanagawa since 2013-), HC Mrs. Mami Kawamura (based in Beppu, Oita since 2016-), HC Mr. Chikayuki Shimizu (based in Ebetsu, Hokkaido since 2018-), HC Mr. Hiroki Miura (based in Akita since 2018-) and HC Mr. Takanori Okada (based in Osaka, since 2019-), for their tremendous work and contributions towards the Fijian Government and its people. The Embassy and honorary consuls discussed various issues of their activities, including the PALM 9 Leaders meeting in June 2021 and the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in July and August 2021. Consular challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, Human resource development and People-to-people exchanges as well as trade and investment in Fiji.



### The 2nd Network Officials' (Virtual) Meeting

The second Network Officials' (Virtual) Meeting between Pacific Island Ambassadors Group and the Local Government Networking (14 prefectures in total) organised by the Secretariat – Kochi Prefecture, took place on 9 February 2021.

The main issues discussed covered the PALM 9 Leaders meeting in June 2021, the COVID19 Response and Recovery, Strengthening Public Health Structures, Climate Change and Disaster Resilience, Support to SME's, Trade and Investment, Labor mobility and Technical Training, and People-to-people exchanges. Most of the Ambassadors present expressed their appreciation for the assistance provided by the Prefectural Governors for their continuous support towards the Pacific Island Countries.



### Courtesy Calls



(l-r) In January-March 2021, Ambassador Isikeli Maitaitoga also had the opportunity to meet with 1) Member of the House of Councillors, Hon. Seiichi Eto MP; 2.) Newly appointed JICA Resident Representative to Fiji, Ms. Mayumi Amaike and Mr. Shinya Tamio, Director of the Pacific and Southeast Asia Division 6; and 3.) Tokyo Metropolitan Government officials who visited the Embassy for the Ambassador's New Year Greetings video message.



# Questions with our Fiji nationals

## Mr. Leone Gukirewa Karawalevu - Assistant Language Teacher

*Working as an Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) includes academic work and practical experience. It also bears a weight of responsibility as you are as much an ambassador for your country as you are a teacher.*

### How did you come to Japan to work as an Assistant Language Teacher?

I came to Japan as an Assistant Language teacher- a job category for foreign teachers who teach the English Language in Japanese schools. This year 2021, marks the 10th year of my employment as an Assistant Language Teacher directly hired by the Takanezawa Board of Education in Tochigi Prefecture. My employment details and conditions were negotiated by His Excellency, the Ambassador of Fiji to Japan Mr. Isikeli Maitaitoga, and his staff at the Fiji Embassy in Tokyo. I am truly thankful for the opportunity to come to Japan and work.

### How different is your experience teaching Japanese children to teaching in Fiji?

My experience for the last 10 years in Japan has been a wonderful one, and I wish to state here that it was due to the many worthwhile experiences I gained in my 28 years of working as a teacher both in primary and high schools in Fiji with all the struggles and difficulties working in remote locations and with limited resources, we managed to persevere in executing our call of duty. The difference is huge in terms of student-teacher ratio, the number of teachers in a class, high-tech teaching and learning aids and subject content, and students' ability in different sports, music, arts, and crafts. The schools are well resourced, and the source of funding is always available.

### What are the backgrounds of the students you teach?

I teach in elementary schools from Grade 1-6. I am assigned to three schools in our town in a week. Most of the students are sons and daughters of Honda Company workers who reside in our town and are from small nuclear families. All the students went through Early Childhood Education before graduating from Elementary School.

### How well have you managed a class whose first language is not English?

My work as an Assistant Language Teacher is to assist the Japanese Teacher of English and the Class Teacher in areas of difficulties in learning a new language and offer practical suggestions and ideas. There can be 4 to 5 teachers in a class, all assisting the in the free flow of the class and some of these teachers attend to special students who may be slow learners or have some learning disabilities.

### What motivates you to teach?

I have always wanted to be a teacher from an early age, maybe because those were the only occupations we knew of in those days, and there were limited options. I started working as a teacher in 1983 and have thoroughly enjoyed all the worthwhile experiences over the years. Now I have a few more years before I call it a day and return home and retire with my relatives in the village.

### What are the challenges you face and how have your cope with them?

In terms of challenges, I have a few. The first challenge was to resign from my position as Vice-Principal Suva Grammar School in 2011 and to take up this teaching job in Japan. It was a big decision I made, and I can honestly say that I never regretted it until now. The initial challenge was to blend in well with the local community, and all the past years, the Fiji Embassy Tokyo and the Fiji Community, especially University students in the Kanto Region, congregate at our town for people-to-people cultural exchanges. Those exchanges and outreach have made a tremendous impact in our local community to understand more about our beautiful Fiji. And the final challenge now is the closing of borders due to the COVID 19 pandemic, which has made us cancel our much-anticipated summer holidays in July and August every year. Apart from all the above, it is all good here in Takanezawa.

The new academic year has just started, and we are all looking forward to a great year and the reopening of the borders so we can come home for Christmas and New Year.



Master Leone Gukirewa



w/Ambassador Maitaitoga during one of his courtesy visits to Takanezawa Town, Tochigi.





**Mr. Yu Deryck Thomas - Professional Rugby Player**

*Being a competent professional rugby player requires skills and abilities. Still, it also bears a weight of responsibility as you are as much an ambassador for your country as you are a rugby player.*

**What brought you to play rugby in Japan?**

I initially came to Japan on a scholarship to study and play rugby at Hakuoh University. This was made possible by the assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Paulo Nawalu.

**How is playing professional rugby in Japan different to playing in Fiji?**

Professional rugby in Japan is very high tempo and quite structured, whereas, in Fiji, rugby is aggressive and physical, with unpredictability. This common scene gives Fiji rugby its uniqueness.

**How well have you managed a team whose first language is not English?**

Yes, the Japanese language was initially difficult to learn, but with endless studying and learning on the go, I now speak fluent Japanese. This attribute contributed immensely to communicating with both the English and Japanese speakers in our team and made managing and playing rugby even more enjoyable.

**What would your advice be to upcoming Fijian rugby players planning to come to Japan to be aware of?**

My advice to young aspiring Fijian rugby players is that the first few weeks in Japan will be difficult, especially missing family and the way of life from the motherland. However, just like anything in life, after weathering the struggles of language, appetite change, feeling homesick, etc., you start to appreciate and enjoy the rugby training, games, teammates, schoolwork. Overall, come with an open mind to absorb new learnings and remember always to be punctual to any meeting as Japan is very strict on TIME management.

**What are the challenges you face playing rugby in Japan and how did you overcome them?**

A major challenge I would say in terms of playing professional rugby in Japan would be the foreigner rule. A team can only field 5 foreigners per match now, which was only 3, back when I initially started. During the weeks I didn't get selected for matches, I worked on my weak skills and tried to stay mentally positive and physically in shape. Thus, I played well the weeks that I was selected and managed to stay in contention for selection for more matches.

**Do you see future opportunities for Fijian rugby players to play in Japan?**

Yes, definitely! Fijian players here in Japan at high school, university, club, top league levels have risen considerably. In my opinion, Japan Rugby training and style of play work well for Fijian players. Understanding the language, culture should see more Fijian players presented with more opportunities to pursue Rugby careers here in Japan.

**The Fiji Embassy is negotiating with Japanese High Schools for more Fijian students to be offered scholarships to come to Japan, attend high school, and play rugby. What do you think of this initiative?**

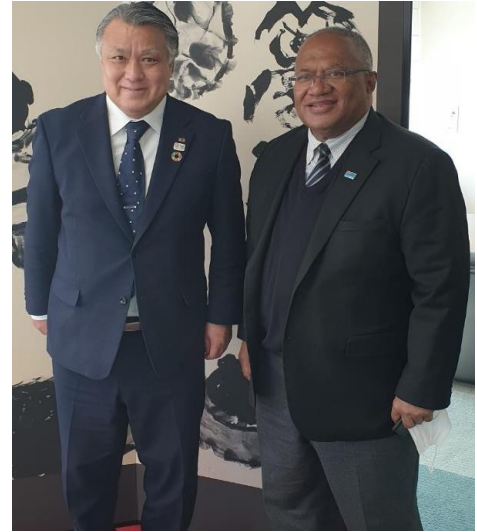
I reckon this is a GREAT initiative. I would offer a suggestion - When coming over, if the students could be paired, as this would act as a buddy system. Obviously, they would need to learn the Japanese language and adapt to the rugby schedules, etc. But, with a fellow country brother nearby, helps to reset the mind and body for another day/week. Also, having a mentor in place to help the young students understand how things are done here in Japan through social media, text messages, calls, etc.

## Exchange Programs

### Meeting with President of the Japan Football Association

A meeting between Ambassador Isikeli Mataitoga and Mr. Kohzo Tashima, President of the Japan Football Association (JFA) was hosted on 15 March 2021 at the JFA Headquarters in Tokyo. The initial meeting, arranged by the Embassy and supported by the President of the Fiji Football Association (FFA), noted the close relationship between FFA and JFA as they both are FIFA Council Members.

The main issues discussed covered the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between JFA and FFA and the areas of cooperation, including sports team exchange, official development programs, coaching clinic, and so forth. FFA President Mr. Rajesh Patel thanked the Ambassador for the successful meeting and welcomed the decision of the JFA to draft an MOU and work along for progress in football.



### Meeting with President of the Japan Rugby Football Union

A meeting between Ambassador Isikeli Mataitoga and Mr. Shigetaka Mori, President of the Japan Rugby Football Union (JRFU), was hosted on 16 March 2021, at JRFU Headquarters in Chichibunomiya, Tokyo. The meeting, arranged by the Embassy and supported by the Fiji Rugby Union (FRU), noted the close cooperative collaborations between FRU and JRFU.

Ambassador Mataitoga and Mr. Mori discussed issues pertaining to the request from the FRU. Discussions also centered on the Super Rugby, as well as FRU/JRFU consideration in developing relations to cover High School Rugby Teams and Fiji players coming to Japan, coaching staff development, and sports medicines cooperation.



### Virtual Meeting with Local Government Officials

In January and February 2021, Ambassador Mataitoga also had virtual consultations with Oita, Saga, and Akita City Office officials regarding mutual Exchange Programs for the year. Oita City, Oita Prefecture, will host Team Fiji for the pre-Tokyo 2020 Games training camp in July 2021. Fiji has a very close and friendly relationship with these respective cities and prefectures, including Takanezawa Town in Tochigi Prefecture.



(l-r) Ambassador Mataitoga with senior officials from 1.) Oita City Tokyo Olympics & Paralympics Promotion Bureau; 2.) Saga Prefecture Government Office and Saga Sports Commission; and 3.) Akita City Sports and Planning Division.



# Fiji-Japan Stories

## Glimpse of the recent Japan's Assistance Projects to Fiji

### Sigatoka Town Council to get new garbage compactor truck

The Japanese Government has given \$170,504 to the Sigatoka Town Council for the procurement of a five-tonne garbage compactor truck. Minister for Local Government Premila Kumar says this will help reduce costs as the Sigatoka Town Council has been paying around \$70,311 a year to a private company. Kumar says this will benefit 297 ratepayers and more than 500 businesses houses in Sigatoka Town. To date, Japan has provided 12 garbage compactor trucks to municipal councils.

The Charge d'Affairs of Japan to Fiji Hada Tsuguyoshi says under the Grassroots Human Security Project they have implemented 392 projects worth more than US\$28 million so far. Tsuguyoshi says he is confident that this new truck will address the challenges faced by the Sigatoka Town Council due to the expansion of its waste collection service area.

Source - <https://www.fijivillage.com/news/Sigatoka-Town-Council-to-get-new-garbage-compactor-truck-5fr48x/> \*11.01.2021



Hon. Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama with HE Mr. Fumihiro Kawakami, Ambassador of Japan to Fiji after the signing ceremony at the Office of the Prime Minister on 22 February 2021

### Japan Investment Boosts Fisheries

The Ministry of Fisheries now owns two ice-plants in Navua and Rakiraki respectively, and a seven-ton truck. It follows a hand over by the Overseas Fisheries Co-operation Foundation of Japan (OFCF).

Resident Representative Overseas Fishery Cooperation Foundation of Japan (OFCF) Fiji Office, Shimamoto Kunikazu, said the donation was part of their contribution to protecting and boosting the fisheries industry in Fiji and the Pacific.

Source - <https://fijisun.com.fj/2021/03/04/japan-investment-boosts-fisheries/> \*4.03.2021

### The Loan through Japan's Leading Asia's Private Infrastructure Fund to support aviation sector in Fiji

On 12 March 2021, the Loan utilizing Japan's Leading Asia's Private infrastructure Fund (LEAP) was signed between Fiji Airways and the Asian Development Bank. LEAP fund was established through JICA and administrated by ADB, aiming at promoting Japan's initiative of "Quality Infrastructure Investment" announced by the Government of Japan. The financing comprises 25 million USD loan from LEAP, in addition to the 40 million USD loan from ADB, to support the aviation sector in Fiji, which has been heavily affected by COVID-19 pandemic.

Source - [https://www.fj.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr\\_ja/11\\_000001\\_00229.html](https://www.fj.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/11_000001_00229.html) \*12.03.2021

### Japan Offers \$200m COVID-19 Loan To Fiji

The Government of Japan yesterday formalised \$200 million Emergency Yen Loan for COVID-19 Response' to the Fijian Government in its efforts to enhance resilience against the pandemic. A Signing and Exchange of Notes ceremony signifying Japan's assistance (10 Billion Japanese Yen) to Fiji was yesterday hosted by the Office of the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama said the best way to build resilience over the long-term is to bring our COVID-stricken economy fully back to life.

Source - <https://fijisun.com.fj/2021/02/23/japan-offers-200m-covid-19-loan-to-fiji/> \*23.02.2021

### Japan Grants \$900K To Boost Missions

The Japanese Government has provided grants to organisations to improve their service delivery. Yesterday, Habitat for Humanity Fiji, Land Transport Authority, Nairairai Development Co-operative, and Sai Prema Foundation together received grants amounting to \$900,000.

Source - <https://fijisun.com.fj/2021/03/26/japan-grants-900k-to-boost-missions/> \*26.03.2021



Every time you buy Fijian made products; you are helping to provide for our Fijian families. A very substantial number of Fijians are employed by Fijian manufacturers. When these Fijian companies grow, they hire more people, contribute to taxes, and even export more products, bringing in more income into the country. It means we have a strong economy and a stable financial environment for all of us.

**You can help our economy grow!**

### **Fijian Made Product Profile - Essence of Fiji**

- ✓ Debra Sadranu, founder of the Essence of Fiji Group created a totally integrated operation specializing in spa training, spa operations & product manufacturing.
- ✓ The Group's Skin & Health brands advocate the importance of organic, capturing the true meaning of holistic health. Organic Nama Sea Grapes hand harvested from the Blue Lagoon waters of Fiji, show their committed focus on creating revenue and improving the livelihoods of women in the villages of Fiji.
- ✓ Nama Fiji a premium hydration skin care range used throughout Fiji's 5 stars Resorts is also exported internationally. The company recently launched a new brand VS skincare for Men and VS Sports for women available throughout local salons, Tappoo Department stores and soon to be exported internationally. Nama Fusion offers a healthy alternative to salt, with Nama Seasoning for both restaurants and retail sales.

#### **Interest in New Markets:**

Global distributions, Asia or Europe.

#### **Contact Details:**

Ms. Debra Sadranu – Managing Director

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W: [www.essencegroupfiji.com](http://www.essencegroupfiji.com)

### **Fijian Made Product Profile - Zonah United**

- ✓ Zonah United's vision is to increase production, manufacturing and deliver Premium Packed Quality Fijian Grown Organic Spices to the international market.
- ✓ Zonah United started with humble beginnings in 2012 with the company's initiative to always assist the rural community in Fiji especially woman to help provide a source of income for them and increase the standard to living for their families.
- ✓ Products include Turmeric Powder, Ginger Powder, Cinnamon Sticks, Cinnamon Powder and Chili Flakes.

#### **Interest in New Markets:**

To expand and connect with the global distributions.

#### **Contact Details:**

Ms. Naheeda Maqbool - Director

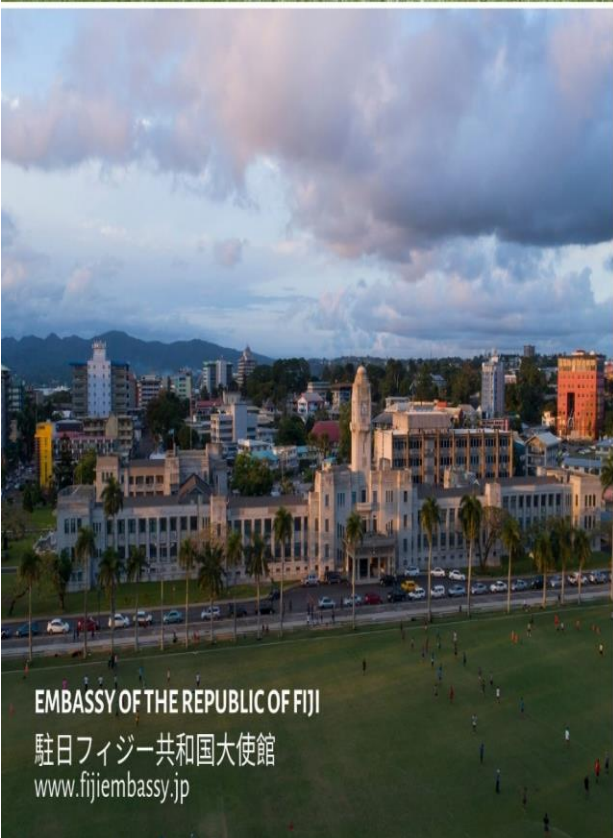
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**FEEL THE NATURE & HAPPINESS, TAKE ME THERE**

大自然と笑顔が待ってるよ。フィジーへ飛ぼう。



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