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Private Mail Bag, Lautoka, Ph: 6640600, Fax: 6640700, email: info@unifiji.ac.fj, web: www.unifiji.ac.fj

Fiji Day Celebrations and Book Launching

The Centre for Indigenous Studies organized Fiji Day celebrations on Friday October 9. The function was held in the main hall from 2pm – 4pm. The purpose of the function was two-fold: to commemorate Fiji's independence and to launch 'NA VEILIUTAKI E VITI', the Fijian translation of 'Leadership in Fiji' by Dr Rusiate Raibosa Nayacakalou.

Fiji Day is one of the most important events in the national calendar, a day when people of all races get together to celebrate Fiji's Independence. This year, the University was extremely fortunate to have Mr. Samuela Saumatua, Minister for Local Government, Housing and Environment as the Chief Guest. The programme began with the National Anthem sung by the students of the University followed by the University Prayer recited by Kasanita Nayasi.

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Muralidhar formally welcomed all the guests to the Fiji Day Celebrations. In his speech, Professor Muralidhar gave a brief overview of the University and its progress. He also thanked the Government for supporting the University in the form of grants and scholarships.

In a special address, Mr. Saumatua talked about the importance of celebrating Fiji Day as a nation. He also stressed the vital role that education plays in moving the country forward.

Mr. Saumatua then launched "Na Veiliutaki E Viti", the Fijian translation of 'Leadership in Fiji'. It was a historical event for the Centre of Indigenous Studies as this was their first ever publication.

Mrs. Rejeli Racule, one of the translators later provided an overview of the book being launched. Refreshments were served after the programme.



Performance by the students of the university



Prof. Muralidhar with the Minister for Local Government, Housing & Environment, Hon Samuela Saumatua



From Left- Apakuki Leweravu (co-translator), Apakuki Nayacakalou (son of the writer- Rusiate Nayacakalou), Mr. Aisea Tuidraki (Nadi Town Council Administrator) and Mrs. Rejeli Racule-Fellow- Unifiji)

Department of Accounting Seminar Presentation

The Accounting department's series of seminar presentations had a session on "Issues of Foreign Currency Transactions" with emphasis on International Accounting Standard 21: Effects of Foreign Exchange Rates by Mr. Mohammed Riaz Azam on Wednesday 9th September. Present in the session were the Vice Chancellor, Prof Muralidhar and staff of the School of Business and Economics .

Riaz elaborated on how business account for transactions in foreign currencies and reporting of foreign subsidiary's results and financial position that are included in the financial statements of the parent entity by means of consolidation. He further noted that one of the key issues that needs to be considered in the translation process is which exchange rate(s) to be used and where the effects of changes in exchange rates are reported in the financial statements. He illustrated that for Income statement items

using an average rate system (e.g. average rate for a week, month, year) for all transactions in each foreign currency occurring during that period. However if exchange rates fluctuate significantly, the use of the average rate for the period is inappropriate, businesses have no option but to record each transaction by applying the foreign currency amount at the spot exchange rate between the county's currency and the foreign currency at the transaction date.



Mohammed Riaz presents his seminar on the 'Issues of Foreign Currency Transactions'.

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Eid-ul-Fitr Celebrations

On Wednesday September 23rd, Muslim students of the University organized an inaugural Eid celebration at the main campus in Saweni. The chief guest at the occasion was Mr. Amjad Ali, former politician and current President of Fiji Muslim League, Nadi Branch. The function began with verses from the Holy Quran followed by a recitation. The programme had a good mixture of speeches and items such as Nazams (Islamic Songs).

The Chief Guest, Mr. Amjad presented an informative speech on the significance of Eid. "Eid ul Fitr is linked with the Holy month of Ramadhan. It signifies the end of the month of fasting. It is a unique festival in that it has no connection with any historical events nor it is related to the changes of season or cycles of agriculture" he said. He further added that the significance of Eid ul Fitr was purely spiritual. It is a day when Muslims thank Allah for having given them the will, the strength and the endurance to observe

fast and do acts of charity towards the needy. At the end of the programme, all guests were treated to Eid sweets including Sawai. The event was truly a success and it was also very encouraging to see non-Muslim students participating in the actual programme.



Roziya and her group performing an item in Urdu.



Vice Chancellor Professor Muralidhar with the Chief Guest, Mr. Amjad Ali



Final year IT student, Jone Vukinagauna translates verses from the Holy Quran.

The 2009 Sathya Sai Medical Camps

This year marked the second annual UPSM student attachment to the Sathya Sai Medical Camps. Under the watchful well organized eyes of Mrs. Alka Ram, UPSM Lecturer in Pharmacology, and the medical mentoring of Dr. Fred Merchant, UPSM Professor of Surgery, our medical students spent two weeks this August working with Sai medical teams from New Zealand and Australia and attended to the health care needs of more than 3000 patients at 8 village school sites in Western Viti Levu.

The all volunteer medical team, made up of specialist doctors, dentists, pharmacists, a psychologist, IT technicians and support staff, incorporated our eager, ever-willing students in an unforgettable total teaching-learning experience. The students received unique hands on mentoring by these dedicated professionals learning the details of taking blood pressures, blood sugars, performing PAP smears, and assessing a wide variety of ailments common to our local citizens ranging from children to adults and the elderly.

The students saw the value of well organized discipline and the importance of making and recording their observations when caring for the large number and variety of people seeking medical attention.

Each student rotated through patient Triage registration, General Medicine, Gynecology, Eye Care and Dental Care, Pharmacy Dispensing and Specialty Consultations and wrote a publishable report of her/his experiences.

Highlights of the camps included the early morning bus travel to village sites, grand meals where the day's experiences were reviewed and discussed in lively conversations and finally rest at the end of each busy tour of duty.

On the last day of camp, a grand finale evening meal was served at the Nadi Sai Center where brief speeches were made and gifts purchased by Dr. Merchant and Mrs. Ram were presented by the students to each Sai volunteer. Overall, the students worked hard, learned much and gave their best to those in need. They are now back to their normal university routine much wiser and richer in experience than before.

The entire UPSM staff wishes to let the students know how proud we all are of their growing professionalism and dedicated enthusiasm to learning and developing medical skills for serving those in need. They truly embodied the mission and objectives of UPSM in providing much needed community service on their way to becoming fully trained 21st Century doctors.

To all the staff and volunteers who made the Sathya Sai Medical Camps possible, we say "Vinaka vaka levu," and we look forward to seeing you next year.

*By Dr. Fred Merchant and Mrs. Alka Ram
Umanand Prasad School of Medicine*



21st Century Literacy. Are we ready for it? By Kenneth Nobin (HOD— Dept of Education)

Mr. Ken Nobin, Head of the Department of Education, The University of Fiji, attended recently (11 – 13 Sept) a 'Future Directions in Literacy Conference' organised and hosted by The University of Sydney. Academics, classroom teachers, students and policy makers from Australia, Singapore, New Zealand, U.K. and Canada were represented. At the Conference he presented a paper and workshop entitled, 'Being literate in the 21st Century. Challenges to small island nations. Perspectives from Fiji.'

He mentioned that the current focus of literacy education in many countries continues to be strongly influenced by National testing and reporting. Teachers are pressured to teach to the test.

This has become so powerful that many teachers at the Conference said that there was no time to read with their students.

Others said that creative approaches to thinking and learning about reading and writing were fine in theory but could only be squeezed in once they believed they have prepared their students with sufficient practice for likely test questions. Sounds familiar for us in Fiji?

The tension for the immediate future direction of literacy education highlighted how balanced approaches, authentic resources and creative and imaginative thinking enhanced children's literacy development and inevitably lead to better achievement. Mr. Nobin stated that 'any definition of literacy for the twenty-first century needed to be broad.'

He agreed with Prof, Allan Luke, the keynote speaker at the Conference, who said that 'literacy is the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken, print and multi media.'

Numerous exemplary practices and evidence-based research presentations supported this view.

Mr. Nobin concluded that 'the Conference was intentionally provocative. We were challenged to think outside the proverbial square and beyond our comfort zones to enrich our current understandings. How else can we move into the future?'

We have many issues surrounding literacy education in Fiji. It is through reflective discussion, questioning, pondering, rethinking and sharing of ideas with colleagues from around the world that we can begin to discern the best way forward for our children in Fiji. We should not settle for anything less. Fortunately, a recent research grant from Vodafone ATH Fiji Foundation will help us at The University of Fiji begin to address this challenge through research and will help us provide much needed literacy resources and professional development opportunities for teachers in 2010.'

Gandhi Day Commemoration

The University celebrated Gandhi Day on Friday 2 October. The event was organized to commemorate the 140th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The staff and students of the University have been celebrating Gandhi Day since 2005. It was a special occasion for everyone to get together and reflect on the teachings and beliefs of this great individual.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (2 October 1869 – 30 January 1948) was the pre-eminent political and spiritual leader of India during the Indian independence movement. He was the pioneer of satyagraha—resistance to tyranny through mass civil disobedience, firmly founded upon 'ahimsa' or total nonviolence—which led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world.

Gandhi is commonly known around the world as Mahatma Gandhi. He was officially honoured in India as the Father of the Nation; his birthday, 2 October, is commemorated there as Gandhi Jayanti, a national holiday, and worldwide as the International Day of Non-Violence.

Gandhi first employed non-violent civil disobedience while an expatriate lawyer in South Africa, during the resident Indian community's struggle for civil rights. After his return to India in 1915, he organized protests by peasants, farmers, and urban labourers concerning excessive land-tax and discrimination.

After assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1921, Gandhi led nationwide campaigns to ease poverty, expand women's rights, build religious and ethnic amity, end untouchability, and increase economic self-reliance. Above all, he aimed to achieve Swaraj or the independence of India from foreign domination. Gandhi famously led his followers in the Non-cooperation movement that protested the British-imposed salt tax with the 400 km (240 mi) Dandi Salt March in 1930. Later he campaigned against the British to Quit India. Gandhi spent a number of years in jail in both South Africa and India.

As a practitioner of ahimsa, he swore to speak the truth and advocated that others do the same. Gandhi lived modestly in a self-sufficient residential community and wore the traditional Indian dhoti and shawl, woven with yarn he had hand spun on a charkha. He ate simple vegetarian food, and also undertook long fasts as a means of both self-purification and social protest.

In a moving speech at this year's Gandhi Day celebrations, Sandhiya Roy, a tutor in the department of accounting and finance proclaimed that Gandhi was a man of peace who believed that an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.

Two beautiful songs were also part of the programme. Refreshments were served at the completion of the programme.



Lusi Biuvakaloloma recites a Hindi Poem at this year's Gandhi Day Celebrations



Kasanita Nayasi with her reading at the Gandhi Day Celebrations



Gujarati Song performed by Rekha

CIRA Director attends an International Conference in Shanghai, China

Mr Robin Nair, Director of the Centre for International and Regional Affairs (CIRA) was invited by the Shanghai Institute of International Affairs to deliver a Paper at an international conference entitled East Asia and South Pacific in Regional Cooperation, organized by the Institute from 9-10 September in Shanghai, China. Mr Nair was among a handful of select scholars from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Indonesia, Fiji, and Samoa invited to the Conference. The discussion focused on cooperation between China and South Pacific countries, the roles of Australia and New Zealand in East Asian regional cooperation, relations between China and South Pacific countries, and prospects and policy advices in concern with the future

East Asian regional cooperation, and South Pacific countries.

After the discussion, scholars reached agreements on several topics, like the relations between China and South Pacific countries, analysis and trend of the pattern of China's aid to the South Pacific region, and the trend of East Asian regional cooperation in the future. This meeting had laid a firm ground for the cooperation and communication between institutes of international relations studies in Shanghai.

Mr. Nair said that CIRA/UniFiji will be hosting a high level delegation from the Shanghai Institute for International Affairs in January 2010.



Delegates at the East Asia and South Pacific in Regional Cooperation Conference in Shanghai, China

UPSM Opening Ceremony

The Grand Opening of the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine will take place on Saturday October 24 from 10am–1pm.

The new complex will be officially opened by the Hon. Prime Minister Commodore J.V Bainimarama. Among the invited guests are Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Business leaders, Diplomats etc.

The actual ceremony will be held in the University's main hall with various performances by students of the University.



Programme

- 09:45** Guests to be seated in the Hall
- 10:00** Prime Minister arrives and is escorted to the stage
- 10:05** National Anthem by Cadets from Natabua High School
- 10:10** University Prayer by Lanieta Vakarauvanua
- 10:15** Garlanding of Chief Guest and Mrs Mary Bainimarama
- 10:20** Welcome Address by Professor Srinivasiah Muralidhar Vice-Chancellor
- 10:30** About UPSM – Ms Vasiti Sabua
- 10:40** Address by the Dean of UPSM, Dr Umanand Prasad
- 10:50** Introduction of Chief Guest by Pt Bhuwan Dutt, Pro-Chancellor
- 11:00** Address by the Prime Minister
- 11:15** Inviting the Prime Minister to open the UPSM Building ~ Mr Joji Uluinakauvadra
- 11:25** Interfaith Dedication (*Maulana Hafiz Musa Patel/Rev. Maraya Nasenaivalu/ Pt. Guru Dutt*)
- 11:40** Garbha Dance
- 11:45** Meke
- 12:10** Vote of Appreciation by Dr John Fatiaki
- 12:15** Prime-Minister's party is escorted to the UPSM building, followed by guests
- 12:25** Prime Minister cuts the ribbon and unveils the plaque
- 12:35** Tour of the UPSM Building
- 13:00** Prime Minister's party and guests return to the Hall for lunch