

SPEECH BY PT. BHUWAN DUTT –PRO CHANCELLOR ON THE OCCASION OF FOUNDATION LAYING  
CEREMONY OF UNIFIJI LIBRARY BUILDING SAWENI, LAUTOKA ON 10.11.09

The Chief Guest Pt Ram Narayan Sharma and Mr Hirdesh Sharma of Sharma's enterprises, the Vice Chancellor Professor Srinivasiah Muralidhar, Pt Kamlesh Arya 'Arya Ratna' Council member and trustee APSabha, Mr Shanti Saroj Council member and trustee Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, the Registrar Miss Sarojini Pillai, Dr K L Sharma Chairman of Unifiji Library Committee, Mr Jose Librarian , members of Unifiji staff, members of APS, the contractor Mr Vijay of Engineer Procure Construction Fiji Ltd, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I welcome you all to this special event.

It is indeed my pleasant task to address the gathering on this auspicious occasion of the foundation laying ceremony of the new library building. First of all I thank almighty God for all His kindness and guidance in making us reach this stage of development of the new library building. GD BRKG

This project is an example of the great partnership that exists between the donor Sharmas Enterprises Ltd and the University of Fiji.

The beginnings of this partnership go back some two years ago when I was invited to meet Mr Ram Narayan Sharma at his business premises to discuss what kind of assistance was needed in the APS education programme. At that time Mr Sharma had a smaller project in mind . He had the view that he could donate some funds for the needy students to pay their fees at Pt Vishnu Deo Memorial College. Such a fund could be a corpus fund from which fees could be paid out.

Later Pt Arya and I met the Sharma family again to explore the possibilities of a bigger project for the university in particular, as the need was felt greater at this new institution. Things continued to develop until the Sharma family agreed and came up with a proposal for a bigger project specifically for the University of Fiji. In consultation with the University, we considered that the most important facility that we needed at Unifiji was a good modern library.

It was on 22.12.08 that in a meeting between the Sharma family and myself at APS Headquarters, it was agreed to pursue the new library project which at that time was estimated to be about 100 ft by 40 ft. and was then estimated to cost around \$300,000.00 for the ground floor alone. There were a number of issues to be sorted out and it was then agreed that we should meet at the Saweni campus to progress the project.

Thus we met at Saweni campus in VC's office on 24.02.09 which was the first joint meeting of the library development committee. It was chaired by me and attended by the VC, Dr KL Sharma and the library committee, other staff of UniFiji , Mr Ram Narayan Sharma and Mr Hirdesh Sharma, and the architect rep Rohit Balgovind. After discussions on the type of building required ,the architect was asked to come up with the outline design plan of the proposed library building.

The next meeting was on 4.3.09, then on 5.06.09, and so on wherein refinements continued to be made on the building details, leading to the conclusion and drawing up of a Memorandum of Understanding which was signed between the parties on 24.7.09. This laid the foundation for commitment and steady progress on this important project.

The final site for the new building had to await completion of the Master Plan by Mr Felix Riedweg who was here on Australian Volunteer Scheme and prepared the Master Plan of development of the university land.

At this juncture I would like to acknowledge the presence here of Pt Kamlesh Arya Fiji's former High Commissioner in Australia and the assistance that he readily provided in facilitating the acquisition of the services of Felix Riedweg. Felix did a good job and has left a plan for us to consider and utilize.

Thus the location of the library is more or less where Felix had recommended it, in consultation with UniFiji staff and APSabha.

It should be noted here that the new library is building 40ft by 80ft with ground and two upper floors. Sharmas Enterprises is kindly providing the necessary funding as donation for the ground floor building and concrete roof. The funding for the other two floors is being procured by Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji from bank loan guaranteed by the Sabha. The whole building will cost in the vicinity of \$1.2 million. Once completed the building will be named Ram Narayan Sharma Building.

While the plans were sent for government approval, tenders were called by the architect. Tenders were processed and the successful contractor selected to be Engineer Procure Construction Ltd of Lautoka.

The contract was signed on 20.10.09 and the ground breaking ceremony was held on 30.10.09 as many of you already know.

With the foundation laying today, steady progress is anticipated and the library building should be ready in about 8 months from now.

On behalf of the University of Fiji and the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji I extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Pt Ram Narayan Sharma family for their generous donation which would amount to about \$400,000.00 more or less. I can assure Pt Ram Narayan Sharma family that your donation is going to a very worthy cause and that is education. Education is something that one will never lose wherever in the world one may go. May God shower His blessings on the family and may they forever prosper. To the contractor I say May God guide you to do a good and honest job for that is what will build your future.

To the educators and students who would use this library, the Vedic verse from Rig Ved says- O learned persons, just as the cow gives milk for the health and happiness of all, in a similar manner you should always disseminate true knowledge to all.

I wish a successful completion of this project. Thank you.