

## December Graduation



*Haider Malik, top student in Community Medicine with his family during graduation*

Two hundred and fifty nine students graduated in various programmes of study at Saweni campus on 7 December, 2019. Fifty of them were MBBS students. Speaking at the graduation ceremony, Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Narendra Reddy said that he was very happy to report that the university has achieved a significant academic milestone since the inception of the university fourteen years ago.

“One important criteria while assessing and ranking universities both locally and globally is whether we are offering programmes and graduating students at the doctoral level.”

“Today, we will be awarding the first PhD degree during the graduation ceremony. Congratulations to the Department of Management and the School of Business and Economics for a landmark achievement as today we will be awarding the first PhD degree. I wish to thank and recognize the contributions of the Dean of the school, and the supervisors for this PhD thesis” he said.

Addressing the guests during the ceremony, Professor Reddy highlighted the achievements of the Department of Accounting and Finance. The department received two international accreditations of its programme apart from the local accreditation from Fiji Institute of Accountants (FIA). The Degree of Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting has received Certified Practising Accountants Australia (CPA Australia) accreditation in July for a period of 5 years and Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ) Accreditation in October for a period of 3 years.

“The Department of Accounting now has 3 accreditations (2 international and 1 local). This confirms that the Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting programme is internationally recognized and on par with Australian and New Zealand standards and is of quality.” Professor Reddy stressed.

“CANMEDS (Canadian Medical Council) has granted permission to our medical school to use their educational framework/graduate attributes in our MBBS programme. moreover, WHO (World Health Organisation) directly lists our MBBS programme as being accredited by Canadian Medical Council making UPSM graduates eligible to sit for their (Canadian) licensing exams. This is another significant achievement,” Professor Reddy informed.

Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Narendra Reddy said through capital expansion, a new lecture theatre complex was completed at the Samabula Campus.

“This has reduced the pressure for teaching space at Samabula Campus,” he said.

“There are plans for a similar lecture theatre complex together with offices, computer laboratory and science labs to be constructed at the Saweni Campus.

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“This facility is necessary with the increased enrolment forecasted at Saweni Campus over the next few years.

“Capital expenditure especially for larger projects like lecture theatres require extensive planning and also require large amount of funds and this is where we are somewhat constrained.”

He said the contributions of Government plays a major role towards the running of the school had increased to \$4.12million for the 2018/2019 period.

“We are most grateful to the Government of Fiji for their support over the years and look forward to their continued support in the future. The Government Grant is one of the pillars in the university’s revenue sources. And have been instrumental in helping the institute gain greater recognition over the years.” Professor Reddy informed.

He concluded his speech by congratulating the graduands.

“Congratulations on successfully completing your respective

programmes of study. This has been a long and demanding journey. The battle of acquiring a qualification is over but the war of its application and getting an appropriate job is there ahead of you.”

“In the next journey, you all will carry the label of “UniFiji graduate” and we would like you to be proud of your association with the University and be brand ambassadors for us. When you do well at the workplace you further enhance the image and reputation of The University of Fiji. This will help future graduates too with the enhanced reputation of the University which you will have created.”

“This is just as you have benefitted from the good work and image created by past graduates. Education is a never ending process and some of you might like to come back for further and higher level of study.” he concluded.”

As of last graduation, the university has conferred 3100 graduates with qualifications at certificate, diploma, bachelor, postgraduate diploma, masters level programmes.

### First PhD Award Celebration



*Dr. Amar Singh (middle) with his two supervisors: Associate Professor Dr. Ranasinghe Amaradasa (left) and Professor Narendra Reddy (right)*

The University of Fiji achieved yet another milestone last year by awarding the first PhD Degree to a student from School of Business and Economics. Dr. Amar Singh became the first student to graduate with a Doctor of Philosophy in Management. To celebrate the occasion, the university invited external stakeholders, especially people from the Sugar Industry, Council members and other corporate people within the proximity of Saweni campus.

For Dr. Amar Singh, balancing a full time job while pursuing his PhD has not been an easy task.

It has been a goal he has achieved through hard work and the support of his family and workmates.

“I currently work for Fiji Airways as Manager Network Planning,” he said. “At the same time, ever since I graduated from MBA in 2004, I’ve been teaching as part of the MBA programme and as soon as UniFiji started the MBA programme, I started teaching here”.

“On one side, I had to manage my full time job, the other was contributing to the MBA teaching and taking out my time to complete my PhD so it was very challenging and demanding.”

He credited his achievement to his family, his supervisors and the Fiji Airways management team, who he said created an environment for employees to explore their talents and up skill themselves.

The thesis topic was “Factors Causing Decline in Fiji’s Sugarcane Production”. Professor Narendra Reddy and Associate Professor Dr Wasantha Ranasinghe were his supervisors.

Addressing the guests in a special celebratory function, Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Narendra Reddy said one important criteria while assessing and ranking universities both locally and globally was whether the university offered programmes and graduating students at the doctoral level.

“Congratulations to the Department of Management and the School of Business and Economics for a landmark achievement regarding the first PhD degree,” he said.

“I wish to thank and recognize the contributions of the dean of the school, and the supervisors for this PhD thesis. This clearly demonstrates that The University of Fiji can undertake and deliver doctoral level thesis to completion within a three year period.”

### CA Australia and New Zealand Accredits Bachelor of Commerce in Accounting Programme

The Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ) has recently accredited The University of Fiji’s Bachelor of Commerce programme.

CA ANZ was formed 3 years ago and the registered body is based in Australia. It has members exceeding more than one hundred thousand serving in Australia, New Zealand, and other countries across the globe.

The University of Fiji’s Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting) programme is the only programme in Fiji to receive two international accreditations.

The accreditation adds value to the Accounting programme at the University and shows that the accounting offering at the UniFiji is second to none in the world. The accreditation also enhances credibility of the Accounting programme and those enrolled therein, demonstrating that the qualification

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is recognized internationally. The accreditation also depicts that the programme structure, the course contents, delivery and the resources are of a high standard.

The accreditation from CAANZ will bring about various benefits to the University and its students including building networks, sharing of resources and keeping up to date through professional development of staff as well as students. Being associated with international bodies such as CPA Australia and CAANZ also allows for discounts and concessions on many resources, particularly for the members and the students.

With the recent international accreditation by CAANZ the programme has achieved three accreditations. Two are international accreditation (CAANZ and CPA Australia) and one local accreditation from Fiji Institute of Accountants (FIA).

The University management thanks Professor Ruvendra Nandan and his team for this wonderful achievement.



SoBE Dean, Associate Professor Ranasinghe Amaradasa (second from right) and Professor in Accounting, Professor Ruvendra Nandan (second from left) with their team from Accounting Department

## International Conference on Go Green /Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities



Associate Professor Dr. Wahab Ali at the conference

Science League's International Conference on Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (ICSSAH-18) was held on 29th and 30th December 2018 at Hotel Holiday Inn Express in Kuala Lumpur City. It provided an opportunity to research scholars, delegates and students to interact and share their experience and knowledge in technology application. It also provided an excellent international forum

for sharing knowledge and results in educational enhancement. The aim of the Conference was to provide a platform to the researchers and practitioners from both academia as well as industry to meet the share cutting-edge development in the field.

The main objective of the conference was to promote scientific and educational activities towards the advancement of common man's life by improving the theory and practice of various disciplines and sectors of Arts.

Associate Professor Dr. Wahab Ali presented a research paper on "Influence of evolving technology in conceptualizing pedagogy and practice in higher education". The proliferation of new forms of information and communication technology (ICT) has inundated the learning patterns of students at all levels and particularly at higher education level. Teaching the digital generation of learners without a firm grasp of how they learn is like embarking upon a perpetual journey. This study follows up from his earlier research on the topic "Evolving Technology and its impact in the online lives of the digital native university students". The students of today have spent a good part of their lives surrounded by tools of the digital age and this experience calls for a technology integrated paradigm.

Associate Professor Ali's study focused on the influence of evolving technology in conceptualizing pedagogy and practice in higher education. It delved further into staff members' technological activities and presented the influence of them in their students' learning at The University in Fiji. An exploratory research design adopting

a survey using a Likert type scale was implemented and the data was analysed using SPSS Statistical software. Findings are discussed in collaboration with a robust meta-analysis of literature and they reveal that apart from resources, staff readiness, confidence and motivation play important role in the successful integration of ICT in the learning process.

A full paper in this regard will be published shortly in a peer-reviewed journal internationally. Associate Professor Ali is thankful to The University of Fiji for approving the conference leave and for providing a supporting and conducive environment for research and development.



Associate Professor Ali receiving his certificate of presentation from the Conference Chair

## UniFiji Celebrated Hindi Diwas

The University of Fiji hosted Hindi Diwas celebrations on October 5, 2018.

The keynote speaker at the event, Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Narendra Reddy, stated that the true essence of a person's identity was recognized by the language he/she spoke.

"In the expression of culture, language is a fundamental aspect. It is the tool that conveys traditions and values related to group identity. Language has a prominent effect on culture, which eventually shapes the society. Hence, to protect culture and society, language preservation is paramount," he explained.

Professor Reddy urged all to respect languages other than the mother-tongue.

"We need to have greater mutual respect for each other regardless of who we are, which ethnic group we belong to, which language we speak. I think as long as we continue to have mutual respect and dialogues, Hindi will have a stronger and more prominent place," he stressed.

Moreover, he mentioned that there were two versions of Hindi being spoken in Fiji: standard Hindi and Fiji Hindi.

"I feel we should give more importance of our Fiji Hindi- even in schools we are taught standard Hindi but we are losing our mother-tongue Fiji Hindi," commented Professor Reddy.

In conclusion, he said that the Department of Language, Literature and Communications of School of Humanities and Arts at UniFiji offered

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undergraduate Hindi programmes since the inception. The Postgraduate Diploma in Hindi Literature was introduced few years back and from semester 1, 2019, Masters Level would be offered as well.



Invited Guests and staff with the Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Narendra Reddy (middle) with the former Registrar, Ambassador Kamlesh Arya (third from right)

## JDP School of Law Hosts Julius Caesar Play



Law students acting out Julius Caesar play at Fiji Arts Club in Suva

The University of Fiji's Justice Devendra Pathik School of Law's production of the play "Julius Caesar" took place on Thursday, October 18, 2018 at Playhouse, Selbourne Street, Suva from 6pm-8pm.

The play was part of an innovative new project undertaken by the JDP School of Law to unify legal technical

competence and experience with legal values to students. Legal plays are produced annually by the School.

The Dean of JDP School of Law, Professor Shaista Shameem said the origin of the idea to produce a legal play a year came from the fact that law students needed practice in speaking skills because litigation requires confidence and a keen appreciation of performance and theatre.

"Producing a play annually is not only about teaching our students how to use language to best effect, or learning how to memorize. We deliberately choose plays which allow students to explore certain legal values, concepts and themes. We would like our students, whether through performance via producing plays or as the audience, to learn that understanding the law is more than just acquisition of technical competence," she explained.

The event saw numerous personalities from varied works of life attending the play including people from the legal fraternity, JDP SoL staff and students and many more.

The first play "Antigone" was performed by the School in 2017. The School of Law plays are directed by Matt Young, Acting Coach and Chairperson of the Fiji Arts Club in Suva and produced by the School.

## UniFiji In Collaboration with CCF Host Public Forum



Sitting from left: JDP School of Law Dean, Professor Shaista Shameem, Member of Parliament, Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar, Activist, Ms. Roshika Deo, UniFiji Student Association President, Sailosi Dawai and human rights lawyer, Mr. Aman Ravindra Singh

The University of Fiji in collaboration with the Citizens Constitutional Forum (CCF) hosted a public forum themed "Freedom of Expression: Recognition and responsibility about this right and me" on Friday, October 5, 2018.

The forum was part of CCF's "Fiji in Transition: Towards a Sustainable Constitutional Democracy" project funded the European Union (EU). The project focused on strengthening a participatory and inclusive constitutional democracy in Fiji through empowering citizens.

The panelists at the forum included, Justice Devendra Pathik School of Law Dean, Professor Shaista Shameem, Member of Parliament, Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar, Activist, Ms. Roshika Deo, UniFiji Student Association President, Sailosi Dawai and famous human rights lawyer, Mr. Aman Ravindra-Singh.

At the forum, Professor Shameem explained that the freedom of expression had been protected in Fiji since the 1970. She also compared the 1997 constitution and the 2013 constitution with respect to rights of freedom of expression and its limitation. Conclusively, she stated that the limitations cannot undermine the right to freedom of expression itself.

Mr. Ashneel Sudhakar asked a critical question- where do we draw the line between freedom of expression and other's freedom from hate speech, violence and to live a peaceful life? He stated that the 2013 constitution provided that one person's freedom of expression did not impact on other persons rights. In conclusion he stressed that freedom of expression must be performed under the provisions or realms of the law.

Ms. Deo centered her discussions on the Online Safety Act and the Information Act. She also spoke about the shrinking civil society and how student movements in Universities had decreased over the years. Conclusively, she questioned whether people had become passive citizens instead of active citizens. Dawai spoke about empowering youth through the right of education which he felt complemented the freedom of expression right. Mr. Aman Ravindra-Singh addressed on the importance of freedom of expression.

The session ended on high note with discussions from various attendees on freedom of expression right.

## Final National Consultation Workshop on Fiji National Adaptation Plan

In response to international commitments under the Paris Agreement and national needs, under the leadership of the Ministry of Economy, the

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Fijian Government prepared the draft National Adaptation Plan (NAP) as part of ongoing efforts to comprehensively address climate change. Ms. Priyatma Singh from School of Science and Technology (SoST) attended the stakeholder consultation held at Holiday Inn, Suva on September 21, 2018.

SoST is engaged in a number of climate change initiatives and as such this consultation was an important event to attend and support.

The objective of the workshop was to engage with Government representatives who were leading figures in the finalisation of the prioritised actions. This workshop provided opportunity to critique the prioritised actions against the criteria and own professional experience. The aim was to make any proposed changes at the workshop.

The draft NAP was created as a result of national level multi-stakeholder consultation workshops, a written feedback process, as well as key informant interviews with global and national experts, regional organisations, and national civil societal organisations. The NAP has been supported by the NAP Global Network, financial with support from the Canadian and USA Governments.

Upon the completion of National Consultation Workshop, it will be reviewed by the NAP Steering Committee before undergoing inter-ministerial and Cabinet Clearance.

The School of Science and Technology's contributions towards climate change actions were appreciated and acknowledged.



*Mr. Ravneel Chand (sitting in the middle) with his science students*

## New Zealand Plant Protection Society Conference (NZPPS) 2018

Mr. Ravneel Chand from the School of Science and Technology was an oral presenter at the New Zealand Plant Protection Society Conference (NZPPS) 2018. He presented his paper on 'Threats posed by Asian subterranean termites in the Fiji Islands and their potential controls: a review'. The event was organized by the New Zealand Plant Protection Society and was hosted in Nelson, New Zealand from August 14-16, 2018.

The conference was part of the journal of the New Zealand Plant Protection Society which was indexed in Biosis and Scopus. The journal and the indexed in Biosis and Scopus. The journal and the conference allowed the findings of presenters to be heard and communicated to those who utilized it to increase production, improve quality, ensure sustainability and reduce environmental impacts.

The professional development sessions were a valuable addition to the members; covering topics from scientific writing, study design and data analysis to dealing with the media. The conference focused on all aspect of biology, ecology and control of weeds, vertebrate and invertebrate pests, pathogens and beneficial micro-organisms in agriculture, horticulture, forestry and natural ecosystems.

Attending this conference provided an opportunity for Mr. Chand to learn more about environmental concerns in regards to plant protection, pest and recent advances in area of biosecurity and plant pathology and at the same time increasing the visibility of The University of Fiji.

Many experts across the globe attended the New Zealand Plant Protection Society conference, 2018, including cohort of scientists from New Zealand and across the

globe, organizations across biosecurity and plant protection and Ministry for Primary Industry (New Zealand).

## UniFiji Science Students Receive Top Recognition

The University of Fiji's staff and students' research paper titled "Traditional use of medicinal plants among selected villages in Fiji Islands" was considered as the Most Outstanding Article for year 2018 by the Pacific Medical Student Journal.

The paper was written by Mr. Ravneel Chand and Year 3 Bachelor of Science students Shilpa Sohagni Devi, Sheemal Seeristi Kumari, Shayal Santoshni Kumar, Nikhila Nirvani Goundar, Natasha Narayan and Priyashna Chandra.

The research paper received the honours amongst various research papers in the region. The selection criteria for the Most Outstanding Article included strong focus within the Pacific Island Region, demonstration of strong research skills whether quantitative, qualitative or through systematic review, written quality of the final product, perceived interest to medical students studying in the Pacific region, provision of educational content not commonly delivered in medical schools and perceived interest of presentation of the piece during the annual conference.

Shilpa Devi, one of the co-authors of the research paper described her feelings after receiving the honours.

"Being a co-author for the Most Outstanding paper of 2018 and attending an International Symposium on Interdisciplinary Ocean Science and Sustainable Management, has encouraged me to further my studies in Master of Sciences abroad in the field of Marine Science, as in years to come I want to see myself as a good researcher in terms of publication," she commented.

The research paper focused on a survey that was carried out at villages in Western Division of Fiji. The survey revealed a total of 50 medicinal plant species from 33 different families that hold medicinal properties to a number of common diseases such as cold, diabetes, measles, menstrual cramps, gastritis, measles and dengue.

The University continues to foster and encourage its staff and students towards the area of research and publication.

## Renewable Energy for the Sustainable Development of Fiji Workshop



*Professor Anirudh Singh*

The University of Fiji in collaboration with the Western Branch of South Pacific Physics Society hosted a workshop themed “Renewable Energy for the Sustainable Development of Fiji” on Saturday, September 29, 2018.

This was the second time a workshop was organized by the Masters in Renewable Energy Management students under the guidance of Professor Anirudh Singh (MREM Coordinator).

The previous one was the “Energy Cadets workshop”, which was held last year.

The core purpose of the workshop was to better inform current and prospective energy practitioners working in the broad areas of climate change, environment and education on the importance of renewable energy and its implementation for the development of Fiji.

The presentations during the workshop were aligned to the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) implemented targets, which gave special attention to hydro, biomass, solar resources and energy efficiency to lower the carbon emissions by 30% by 2030 under Business As Usual scenario (BAU).

Apart from these presentations, a biogas digester set-up was also demonstrated as part of the workshop. The purpose of the demonstration was to show the participants that household waste could be utilized to generate enough energy that could be used in cooking and replace traditional fuelwood that had numerous health related issues.

The workshop this year witnessed a total of 65 participants including Fiji National University students, High School teachers, participants from non-governmental organisations and UniFiji students.

## UniFiji Hosts Pinktober Breast Cancer Awareness



*Dean of UPSM & HS Dr. Elick Narayan (sitting 4th from left) with the former Minister for Health, Honourable Rosy Akbar with the staff of UniFiji and medical students*

Umanand Prasad School of Medicine and Health Sciences in collaboration with the UniFiji Alumni Association hosted the Pinktober Breast Cancer Awareness session on Friday, October 12, 2018 at the Saweni Campus.

While delivering the keynote address at the event, the Minister for Health and Medical Services, Honourable Rosy Akbar, asked an important question as to why the colour pink was associated with the breast cancer awareness. She answered saying that the colour pink represented care, love, understanding and compassion.

Honourable Akbar also highlighted that the breast cancer was the most common cancer in Fiji. She mentioned that 282 cases of breast cancer were recorded by the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in 2017 and 56 cases so far in 2018. An alarming figure that she stated was that the Ministry had recorded a total of 141 mortalities due to breast cancer last year and a total of 77 mortalities recorded from the period of January to July this year.

She further explained that families had a pivotal role to play in the lives of the patients.

“The impacts of breast cancer are devastating the anguish and pain is not only felt by patients, but also their families and children who are drastically traumatized emotionally. Family support is very important. Sometimes we hear very scary stories when our women reach the health centres on the last day. It makes us question, where the family support was. We need to care for our mothers and sisters, we need to care for those who are suffering,” she urged.

Honourable Minister strongly urged all women and men to get screened for breast cancer regularly. She mentioned that the Ministry of Health advocated for early detection and early care. Finally she applauded the work that UniFiji as well as the Cancer Society of Fiji did in order to raise awareness on this important issue as a multi-sectorial approach was pivotal.

Pinktober Awareness Sessions are an annual event for the University to impart knowledge to the men, women and general public of breast cancer issue as with knowledge came hope and help.

## UniFiji Student Chosen Global Youth Ambassador for Fiji



*Patrick Lal- Global Youth Ambassador- Fiji for Youth Opportunities*

Patrick Lal, a student of the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine and Health Sciences at The University of Fiji was chosen as Global Youth Ambassador- Fiji for Youth Opportunities. Lal is among 100 other Ambassadors from around the world to be part of the group.

Youth Opportunities is the largest opportunity discovery platform for youth across the world. Millions of youth have trusted Youth Opportunities as the most effective platform to find latest opportunities and avail important educational contents for continued self-development.

Patrick Lal, a student of the Umanand Prasad School of Medicine and Health Sciences at The University of Fiji was chosen as Global Youth Ambassador- Fiji for Youth Opportunities. Lal is among 100 other Ambassadors from around the world to be part of the group.

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For this purpose, a Facebook page has been created by Youth Opportunities and can be accessed on: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/YOFiji/>. Patrick Lal can also be contacted via his email: [patricklal@yahoo.com](mailto:patricklal@yahoo.com)

Lal's role as the Ambassador would motivate more students of the University to apply for these programmes and get exposure at an international level. This in turn, promotes the University's commitment towards incorporating internationalization into the life of students.

### Fiji Day Celebrations



*Students performing during Fiji day celebrations*

The University of Fiji held a celebration to mark the 48th year of Fiji's Independence on October 9, 2018 at its Saweni Campus. The theme for this year's celebration was "Unity for a Better Fiji."

The Chief Guest at the event, Acting Vice-Chancellor, Professor Narendra Reddy stated that Fiji Day celebration was the idea of reconciliation, progress and unity.

"The betterment of our nation, its progress, peace and prosperity depend on each and everyone who lives here. Fiji is a multi-racial society, consisting of people from different culture, religion, background. The contribution of each sector of our community, whatever large or small must be acknowledged, appreciated and accepted," he said.

Professor Reddy, while addressing the need to have a harmonious multi-racial society, mentioned that Fiji Day celebrations needed to be organized by a central body at UniFiji as opposed to being organized by the iTaukei Students Association.

"When the people of a country are united, they move towards peace and development. Working together as equals on the basis of common citizenry is how we Fijians can take Fiji forward. Students are urged to work in harmony; keep life balanced. Maintain a healthy balance amongst the study, social and personal life. Maintain the peaceful environment. Love and be kind to your surroundings and above all, respect the difference," he stressed.

Conclusively, he quoted famous American President, John F. Kennedy "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country". He explained that doing small things such as picking up the rubbish and being actively engaged in community work would have positive impacts on the country's economy.

The celebration was attended by staff and students of the University.



*Staff during Fiji day celebrations*

### DAV College, Ba Annual Awards Day

Ms. Manpreet Kaur, Lecturer in Linguistics at The University of Fiji graced DAV College, Ba's Annual Awards Function on 16 November, 2018 as their Special Guest. Speaking at the event, sharing the platform with Fiji First MP, Mr. Sudhakar, Ms. Kaur praised the awardees for their hard work and sacrifice during the academic year. Being a proud alumnus of the school herself, Ms. Kaur shared her struggles as a kid and motivating the students to continue to keep alive their dreams.

The Awards Day event was a success story of their Dux, who too struggled; having to walk 30 minutes to catch a bus to school is something one can be proud of. This was a daily routine for Anusil Abisheik of Koronubu, Ba, who was named dux of DAV College in Ba.

"There are no bus services in my area and I have to walk for 30 minutes to the main road to go to school," he said.

"That walk has now finally paid off and I am overwhelmed that my hard work has paid off." He commended his parents for being a pillar of strength in times of need.

"My parents were very supportive. They provided me with all my needs even when we faced financial problems," he said.

"I am glad that I fulfilled their wishes and I dedicate my awards to them."

Ms. Manpreet Kaur and Member of Parliament, Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar inspired the students to continue striving for excellence and aim to reach zenith.



*Member of Parliament, Honourable Ashneel Sudhakar and Lecturer in English Ms. Manpreet Kaur*

Top Medical Student



Avneel Chandra receiving medals from the University Chancellor, Sir Epeli Nailatikau

It was the proudest moment for the Chandra family of Siberia, Labasa after their youngest son graduated with the Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) degree from the University of the Fiji on December 7.

Adding icing to the cake was the remarkable rewards 26-year-old Avneel Chandra received alongside his MBBS degree. Chandra received gold medals for being the Most Outstanding MBBS student, Most Outstanding Internal Medicine student, Most Outstanding Surgery student, Most Outstanding Paediatrics Student and Most Outstanding Clinical Science Student.

An elated Chandra revealed that he was overwhelmed by the remarkable recognition the university bestowed upon him.

While acknowledging the enormous support he received from his family members to

accomplish his dream, the doctoring graduate dedicated his achievements to his only other sibling his elder brother Krishneel Chandra.

“My brother gave up his studies to start work to support me financially with my studies as well as looking after our family.

“His never ending support was one of the major factors that kept me going and motivated me throughout the last six years.

“Though it was a real struggle for me being away from home for the past six years, the sacrifices my family made to ensure I graduate with the MBBS degree is much greater.

“I am so satisfied today that I have paid them back for all their sacrifices in the best way possible.”

The former Labasa College student informed that he chose his career in medicine to become a helping hand in combating the rising number of different kind of diseases in our country.

He pointed out that he hopes to play a pivotal role in controlling the non-communicable disease epidemic in Fiji.

Chandra emphasized that almost every household in the country have one or two persons suffering from heart disease or diabetes which is a grave concern for a small nation like Fiji.

Regional Students Ready for Work Force

The University of Fiji prides itself on offering a wonderful learning experience for regional students.

This was what two of its recent graduates from Vanuatu experienced.

Elton Mathias, 27, and Melas Christian Nos, 28, arrived in Fiji in 2015 and started their studies in the second semester of the year at the university. They graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree.

Mr Mathias said it had been a wonderful learning experience for them.

“It was a good opportunity for me and I am so proud that I got to graduate from this university. When I go back home, there are a lot of things I can do in terms of education, I can teach biology and chemistry and also work in other sectors.”

Mr Nos said university life was challenging, however, he had gotten through with it through the help of his family and peers.

“We went through the three years and now we are graduating,” he said.

“We’ll go back home and spread the word about UniFiji, how it can help students to find work and lead a better life.”



Elton Mathias and Melas Christian during December graduation

Leadership Skills Enhanced



Mrs Bharti Singh

When Mrs Bharti Singh took up the opportunity to further her studies, she knew the experience would not be an easy one.

The principal of MGM High School in Suva, she had to balance her studies at The University of Fiji along with her day job.

Last December, she was one of the 259 students who graduated from The University of Fiji.

Mrs Singh is now the holder of a Master of Educational Leadership qualification.

“I was encouraged by my fellow teacher colleagues to join into this programme so I joined and I found it very interesting,” she said.

“It enhanced my teaching profession back in school and I kept using those units, whatever I learnt, in my class and in school and since I am in an administrative position, it really helped.

She said her experience at The University of Fiji was a wonderful one, made even better with the support of her colleagues and lecturers.